



## Shri Tara Devi

*In the centre [of the island of gems] is the wish fulfilling tree. Under this, a sadhaka should meditate on himself as being one with Tarini, as bright as the rising sun, the utmost sphere of light, in a place surrounded by beautiful maidens with fans and bells, wafted by a gentle breeze bearing the odour of scent and incense - **Todala Tantra, IV***

Tara is quite well known to the West through Her Tibetan manifestations, but some are unaware of the important position She occupies in the Hindu tantrik pantheon. She is the second of the ten Mahavidyas.

The major sources used on this page are an important Kaula tantra called *Brihad Nila Tantra* (see below) and the *Tararahasya* (Secrets of Tara) of Brahmananda Giri. The first deals with the exposition of Nila Sarasvati -- the Sapphire Blue Sarasvati. Sarasvati is the Brahma-Shakti, or spouse of the Supreme Deity in his Creative aspect. The other aspects are Vishnu and Mahesh -- all three symbolised in the three heads of [Lord Dattatreya](#), patron guru of the Natha tradition.

Some have attempted to separate the Hindu Tara from the Tibetan Tara, but there is little doubt that She is the same Devi. This is shown in a reference to Tara in the Hindu *Tantrarajatantra*, where Her mantra is given as *Om Tare Tuttare Ture Svaha* -- identical to the Tibetan version. Here Tara takes her form as Kurukulla.

The various other forms are given in *Brihad Nila Tantra* and [Devirahasya](#), under the names Nilasarasvati, Aniruddha Sarasvati, Ugra Tara, Tarini. Nilasarasvati gives as the fruit of worshipping Her poesy and eloquence. This, aside from clearly relating Nilasarasvati to White Sarasvati, also points to this Goddess being the Shakti of the Letters of the Alphabet, the [Matrika Shakti](#).

She has an important role in Tantrik cosmology because mantra, words, music are considered to be the very source of the cosmos. As Matrika Shakti She deludes the entire human race with Her Maya of letters, and words. This has been expressed in a Tantrik form, but, practically speaking, it is sufficient to say that much hypnosis (Maya) comes about via the medium of words. Millions of people have lost their lives through this power.

Thus Her power and place in the Tantrik pantheon is quite justified, and Her mantra is described as a Siddha-Vidya, the cause of Maya and Englamouring. The background GIF here is the bija mantra of Sarasvati, Aim.

# Abstract of Brihad Nila Tantra

## Chapter One

The tantra opens with a request from Devi to [Mahakala Bhairava](#) to reveal the *Nila Tantra*. Bhairava states that this tantra is the secret of all secrets and revealing it will cause lack of success. Having it in one's home is like having Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. It protects against all misfortunes and its specific virtue is that through it a person can become a miracle worker. It is the king of all tantras and is the core of the quintessence. Bhairava summarises its contents, which include daily worship (puja), the king of mantras, the rules of puja and preparation of its mantra, optional and occasional rites, the secrets of magical restraint, the rules of Kumari puja, hymns, meditations, how to become eloquent, rites of sacrifice (homa), the attainment of poesy, the secret sadhana, the secret mantra, alchemy, preparation of miraculous ashes (bhasma) and everything related to the six magical acts (satkarma).

Firstly, Bhairava deals with the Devi Tarini, which he says is a siddha vidya, causing Maya and englamouring. Her mantra is Om Hrim Strim Hum Phat. This vidya is said to be the heart of Nila Sarasvati. Its application is the attainment of poesy. It is to be pronounced facing north and meditated on as being like a lotus fibre extending from the base of the spine to the 1,000 petal lotus, like ten million fires, suns and moons.

Next the rules of bathing in the morning are described. Again, a sadhaka should face north, visualising the guru in the 1,000 petal lotus. Offering must be given to the rising sun. Then the [gayatri](#) or twilight mantra of Tarini should be pronounced, which is given as Tarayai vidmahe mahograyai dhimahi tanno devi prachodayat.

## Chapter Two

This covers the daily puja of Nila Sarasvati, in the usual way. It should be done in isolated places including cremation grounds, hills and forests. This puja also appears in the [Todala Tantra](#), translated as part of the [Magic of Kali](#).

## Chapter Three

Describes initiation and the characteristics of guru and disciple, as well as the right times for performing diksha (initiation).

## Chapter Four

Contains a description of purashcharana, the method of preparing a mantra so that it becomes successful. Tara's rosary is made of human bone and must be purified and made carefully.

## Chapter Five

Optional rites are the topic of this chapter, as well as the pithas or sacred spots. Kamarupa, where the yoni of the goddess fell after being sliced into fifty parts, is the most important.

## Chapter Six

Covers Kumari Puja, the worship of a maiden. This is preceded by an offering to jackals, implying that the rite takes place in the cremation ground (shmathana). As in the [Kulachadamani Tantra](#), there is reference

to the eight Kula trees, which must also receive their share of worship. A day is the same as a year. Wine must be used when worshipping Kalika but has to be purified first, because Shukra placed it under a curse.

## **Chapter Seven**

Covers the satkarma, or six magical acts, as well as worship of the kumaris. A most interesting section deals with Maha China Krama, which is, essentially left hand tantra (vamachara). The rule here is that of Svecchachara, the path of acting according to one's own will. In this, there is no need for external worship. All can be performed mentally. There are no rules as to the time the puja should be performed, no rules about the place, no need for preparation. The conjunction of yoni and lingam is the essence of the rite. During intercourse, the partners should mentally recite the Tara mantra. It should be performed in the cremation ground.

## **Chapter Eight**

Describes the yantra of Tara (see above). In the centre she and Mahakala are in sexual union. The yantra should be engraved on copper, smeared with kundagola and svayambhu flowers (menstrual blood) and scents including camphor. The practitioner meditates in the heart on Tarini and then draws her, by vital breath, using a flower, into the centre of the yantra.

She is then considered to be present in the yantra and various offerings (upacharas) are dedicated to her and to her attendants in the different parts.

## **Chapter Nine**

Heroic worship is the subject of this chapter, which I have translated on the site. [Vira Sadhana](#).

## **Chapter Ten**

Continues the subject of the previous chapter and expands on Lata Sadhana (creeper sadhana), a synonym for sexual worship.

## **Chapter Eleven**

Gives the Tara mantras, the foremost of which is Om Hrim Strim Hum Phat. Ugra Tara's seventeen letter mantra is Om padme mahapadme padmavati maye svaha. Nila Sarasvati mantra is Aim Hrim Shrim Hsaum Shaub vada vada vagvadini Klim Klim Klim Nilasarasvati Aim Aim Aim kahi kahi kararim Svaha.

## **Chapter Twelve**

The origin of Tarini is the subject of the chapter. She was created by Mahakali to destroy the demons and bring the gods back to their former position.

## **Chapter Thirteen**

This chapter covers the worship of Mahakali and has been translated in full in the [Magic of Kali](#).

## **Chapter Fourteen**

Kamakhya and [Tripura](#) worship. The devi Kamakhya dwells at Kamarupa and has a yantra wherein the [64 yoginis](#) receive honour. Tripura's mantra is Aim Klim Sauh, and the tantra says that she represents the triple Kundalini, her puja being triple in every way.

## Chapter Fifteen

A geographical chapter describing mountains, streams and springs sacred to the worship of various devis and devas.

## Chapter Sixteen

This chapter outlines the specific festivals of Tara and the things to be done during the twelve solar months, as well as the kinds of offerings which please the goddess.

## Chapter Seventeen

Outlines and continues details about worshipping [Kali](#). Her favourite time is on the fourteenth day of the dark moon in the month of Kartik, when she should be worshipped at night. The dhyana (meditation image) of Kali is described with details of the types of pits in which to do homa. This chapter also gives puja details of Sandhya (Twilight) Devi.

## Chapter Eighteen

The thousand names of Tara.

## Chapter Nineteen

The armour and the secret mantra of Tara are described.

## Chapter Twenty

The hundred names of Tara.

## Chapter Twenty-One

A most interesting chapter which deals with alchemy. Copper and lead can be turned into gold. Adepts can create a powerful, magical ash which creates miracles. The chapter also describes the divya (celestial), vira (heroic) and pashu (beast-like) characteristics of tantrik practitioners.

अथ

एकविंशः पटलः ।

( श्रीभैरव उवाच । )

अथ वक्ष्ये महेशानि तत्त्वसारं पुरातनम् ।

येन विज्ञानमात्रेण कुबेर इव जायते ॥ १ ॥  
ताम्रसिसकमेतत्तु पित्तलं चापि यत्नतः ।  
चतुर्हस्तप्रमाणं हि गर्तं कृत्वा तु साधकः ॥ २ ॥  
सरलं भस्म कुर्याच्च विवर्जाङ्गारसंयुतम् ।  
करीषमर्धसं(युक्तं?)ताम्रस्योपरि पूरितम् ॥ ३ ॥  
तापयेत् परमेशानि दिनानि सप्त चैवहि ।  
ततः प(रे?)महेशानि उत्तोल्य यत्नतः शिवे ॥ ४ ॥  
पात्रे लोहमये देवि तमादाय महेश्वरि ।  
वि(वज?)वजो)ङ्गारजैर्देवि अलतैस्तापयेद् दृढम् ॥ ५ ॥  
द्रवीभूतं तथा ताम्रं येन जायेत सुन्दरि ।  
तदर्धं च रसं तत्र दद्यात् प्रयतमानसः ॥ ६ ॥  
विजावरसम्केनैव अटरूषरसेन च ।  
सिंहिकारसकेनाथ युक्तं कुर्याद् महेश्वरि ॥ ७ ॥  
ततश्च स्वर्णं जयेत सत्यं सुरगणार्चिते ।  
मूलमन्त्रस्य जाप्येन सिद्धयत्येव न संशयः ॥ ८ ॥  
सहस्रदशजापेन सिद्धयत्येव न संशयः ।  
पूर्वोक्तेन रसेनैव शुद्धसूतेन वा पुनः ॥ ९ ॥  
समूत्रहत्य तत्र दद्याच्च सिसकं रूप्यतां व्रजेत् ।  
इति ते कथितं सर्वं सर्वसारस्वतप्रदम् ॥ १० ॥

प्रयोगार्हो भवेद् देवि सत्यं सत्यं वरानने ।  
इदानीं शृणु चार्वाङ्गि सूतभस्म तथैव च ॥ ११ ॥  
येन विज्ञानमात्रेण मंत्रसिद्धिर्भवित् प्रिये ।  
सार्धहस्तप्रमाणेन गर्तं कृत्वा तु देशिकः ॥ १२ ॥  
हरिद्रगोमयेनाथ लेपयेत् परमेश्वरि ।  
ततस्तु गजसूत्रेण भस्म कुर्याद् यथाविधि ॥ १३ ॥  
वैजयन्त्याश्च मूलेन तथा सिद्धिरसेन च ।  
करीषकेण देवेशि भस्मीकुर्याद् विधानतः ॥ १४ ॥  
शुद्धसूत समादाय मङ्गले वासरे निशि ।  
ऊर्ध्वार्धो लवणं दत्त्वा भस्मीभवति तत्क्षणात् ॥ १५ ॥  
अश्वत्थपल्लवेनैव संयुक्तं परमेश्वरि ।  
सूतभस्मभवत्येव परेशि नात्र संशयः ॥ १६ ॥  
अश्वदन्तन देवेशि वाजिमारेण चैव हि ।  
संयुक्तसूतं तत्रत्यं भस्मीभवति तत्क्षणात् ॥ १७ ॥  
धातुना सह युक्तं तद् बद्धिभवति सुन्दरि ।  
पातालरसकेनैव मवेच्च स्वर्णमुत्तमम् ॥ १८ ॥  
आदौ च गुलिकां बद्ध्वा पस्चाद् रसेन ताडयेत् ।  
ततो बद्धिभवत्येव सत्यं गुरुगणार्चिते ॥ १९ ॥  
त्रिरात्रस्य विधानेन जपं कुर्याच्छुचिस्मिते ।



तेन भावेन देवेशि पूजयेत् परमेश्वरीं ।  
विना हेतुकमासाद्य क्षोभयुक्तो महेश्वरः ॥ ३० ॥  
यत्र कुत्र कुजे वारे श्मशानगमने कृते ।  
पूजाफलं लभेत् तत्र सप्तवासरसंमितम् ॥ ३१ ॥  
चतुर्दश्यां गते तत्र पक्षपुण्यफलं लभेत् ।  
नागते नार्चते स्थाने पशुरेव न शम् । शयः ॥ ३२ ॥  
नान्यः स्यादधिको देव इति चिन्तापरायणः ।  
साधके क्षोभमापन्ने मम क्षोभः प्रजायते ॥ ३३ ॥  
तस्माद् यत्नाद् भोगयुतो भवेद् विरवरः सदा ।  
भोगेन मोक्षमाप्नोति भोगेन कुलसुन्दरीम् ॥ ३४ ॥  
विना हेतुकमासाद्य क्षोभयुक्तो महेश्वरः ।  
न पूजां मानसीं कुर्याद् न ध्यानं नच चिन्तनम् ॥ ३५ ॥  
यद्यद् वदै निद्राति यत्करोति यदर्चति ।  
तत्सर्वं कुलरूपं तु ध्यात्वैव विहरेत् सुधीः ॥ ३६ ॥  
तस्माद् भुक्त्वा च पीत्वा च पूजयेत् परमेश्वरीम् ।  
न चैव श्रुतिदोषोऽत्र नापराधादिदूषणम् ॥ ३७ ॥  
एकाकी निजनि देशे श्मशाने पवति वने ।  
शून्यागारे नदीतिरे निःशङ्को विहरेत् सदा ॥ ३८ ॥  
वीराणां जपकालस्तु सर्वकालः प्रशस्यते ।



सर्वदेशे सर्वपीठे कर्तव्यं कुलतोषणम् ॥ ३९ ॥

इति विज्ञाय देवेशि सर्वं कुर्याद् वरानने ।

बहुनात्र किमुक्तेन किमन्यत् कथयामि ते ॥ ४० ॥

इति श्रिवृहन्नीलतन्त्रे भैरवीभैरवसंवादे(रसायन भावनिरूपणं) एकविंशः पटलः ॥ २१

## Chapter Twenty-Two

The 1,000 names of Kali.

## Shri Kalika Devi

*O Mother, even a dullard becomes a poet who meditates upon thee raimented with space, three-eyed, creatrix of the three worlds, whose waist is beautiful with a girdle made of numbers of dead men's arms, and who on the breast of a corpse, as thy couch in the cremation ground, enjoyest Mahakala - Karpuradistotra, VII (Woodroffe tr)*

Kali's paramount place of worship is in the cremation ground, preferably at the dead of night, on a suitable day of the waning Moon. Here, her nature becomes clear and apparent. For an adept in the worship, the whole world is a cremation ground, and She, the true form of time, who by herself creates and destroys all, is personified as the pyre. There, after life, all mortals and their wishes, dreams and reflections come to their fruition, a pile of worthless ashes.

If you're a six year old child in the West and watch cartoons on TV, you have an idea who Kali is. She appears in various shows - almost invariably as an evil demoness who the badly animated superhero has to conquer. This is highly insulting to many Hindus, who regard her as the Absolute itself.

Alone amongst all the tantrik deities, it is Kali who has captured the imagination of the West. But rather than reviled, she is revered by countless millions of people. Ramakrishna, the famous Indian sage and saint, was one of her devotees; Rabindranath Tagore another. It's no coincidence that both these great men came from Bengal, for it is there that she continues to receive oblations and offerings of flesh. Nevertheless, traces of her worship are found throughout India and former territories of India.

Her bad reputation in the West probably sprang from her association with the cult of the Thuggees, forcefully suppressed by the British during the days of empire. The Thuggees - the word gave rise to our word thug - were actually Muslims who took the goddess Kali as their tutelary deity. They specialised in ensnaring and then robbing and murdering travellers. Originally, they were only supposed to attack male travellers and in their latter days attributed their downfall to the fact they had started to kill woman travellers too.

But Kali pre-dates the Thuggees, quite possibly by several thousands of years. No one truly knows her origin. She does, however, have an uncanny and an ambiguous image. Modern pictures of her show her standing on the dead body of her consort Shiva, with four arms, a necklace of fifty human skulls, a girdle of human arms, holding an axe, a trident, a severed human head and a bowl of blood. Around her rages a

battle - she herself is the colour of a thundercloud. Her protruding tongue drips with the fresh blood of her enemies.

But this image is simply one of many, as we shall see. She is the goddess in her form as Dakshina Kalika - one of the most popular Bengali images of the goddess. Her guises are many, and include Bhadra (auspicious) Kali, Shmashana (cremation ground) Kali, Guhya (secret) Kali and a host of others. It is only in the great tantrik traditions that we find a clue to the real meaning of the gruesome images associated with Kalika. Although Hinduism was much reviled by early Western colonisers for its idolatry and pantheistic practices, this was a very narrow view. Tantrik texts repeatedly speak of the Devis or goddesses as being aspects of the one goddess. The same holds true for the male aspects. As individual humans all reflect the macrocosm, it's fair to describe the gods and goddesses of tantra as specialised aspects of ourselves - and, therefore, of life itself.

Yet life has its dark and its light sides. Death and love, in the tantrik tradition, are two sides of the same coin. As we look to the sky, we can see the Sun and Moon as symbols of male and female, of Shiva and Shakti. In the tantras, the Moon is often taken as a symbol of the Devi, whether in its dark or its bright fortnight. When She wanes, her images and her iconography become progressively more dark and fearsome. But when She waxes, so her images brighten. When she is full, She is Devi Tripura. Tripura is a name of the goddess meaning three cities. These allude to her own triple nature as a maiden (Bala) as a fecund woman (Tripura) and as a post-menstruating woman (Tripura Bhairavi).

Sir John Woodroffe (Arthur Avalon), writing in the *Garland of Letters*, says Kali is the deity in her aspect as withdrawing time into itself. "Kali is so called because She devours Kala (Time) and then resumes Her own dark formlessness." (*Garland of Letters*, page 235). Woodroffe says some have speculated that Kali was originally the Goddess of the Vindhya Hills, conquered by the Aryans. The necklace of skulls which makes up her image, he adds, are those of white people. Relying on the texts themselves, gives insight into the tantrik idea of Kali. In the *Kulachudamani Tantra* (KT), Lord Shiva asks questions answered by Devi, the goddess. It is, probably, one of the oldest tantras, according to Woodroffe, who published the Sanskrit text with an English introduction in his Tantrik Texts series.

In eight short chapters, Devi expounds the essence of her worship, sometimes in most beautiful imagery. But the uncanny side of Kaula and Kali worship is dwelt on in great detail, with references to siddhis - magical powers - including a mysterious process where the tantrik adept leaves his body at night, apparently so he can engage in sexual intercourse with Shaktis. Animal sacrifice also has a place in this tantra.

The siddhis play a large part in the worship of the uncanny goddess Kali. The main tantrik rites are called the six acts (shatkarma) of pacifying, subjugating, paralysing, obstructing, driving away, and death-dealing. But the KT includes others such as Parapurapraveshana, which is the power of reviving a corpse, although according to some it means the ability to enter another's living body; Anjana, an ointment which lets a sadhaka see through solid walls; Khadga which gives invulnerability to swords; Khecari, which gives the power of flying and Paduka Siddhi, magical sandals which take you great distances, rather like seven league boots.

Certainly, the importance of having a suitable Shakti is important, according to the instructions Devi gives to Shiva. Devi here takes the form of Mahishamardini, more popularly known as Durga, who destroyed the two arch-demons Shumbha and Nishumbha in an epic battle between the goddess and the throng of demons. It was at this time, according to legend, that Durga created Kali, emanating her out of her third eye.

We learn more of Durga's legends and myths from the *Kalika Purana*. The Devi, Mahamaya, appeared as Bhadra Kali - identical with Mahishamardini - in order to slay the demon Mahisha. He had fallen into a deep sleep on a mountain and had a terrible dream in which BhadraKali cut asunder his head with her sword and drank his blood.

The demon started to worship Bhadra Kali and when Mahamaya appeared to him again in a later age to slaughter him again, he asked a boon of her. Devi replied that he could have his boon, and he asked her for the favour that he would never leave the service of her feet again. Devi replied that his boon was granted. "When you have been killed by me in the fight, O demon Mahisha, you shall never leave my feet, there is no doubt about it. In every place where worship of me takes place, there (will be worship) of you; as regards your body, O Danava, it is to be worshipped and meditated upon at the same time." (*Kalakikapurana*, ch.62, 107-108.)

For this reason, the image of Mahishamardini always has her trampling the buffalo Mahisha.

When She, the goddess, is dark, She is Devi Kalika, an equally high symbol of death and destruction. Throughout Her different manifestations and phases, She remains the one true goddess, Shakti, energy itself. She is symbolised by the yoni and the female cycle, which also shows waxing and waning throughout the month. Her spouse, Shiva, is symbolised by the Sun, by the phallus, by sperm, and as an emblem of consciousness without attributes. According to the tantrik phraseology "Only when Shiva is united with Shakti has Shiva power to act. Otherwise he is a corpse (shava)."

Another black deity of the Indian sub-continent has a close connection with Kali - Krishna. According to the *Kalivilasa Tantra*, he was born from the golden goddess Gauri, who turned black after she was hit by an arrow from the Hindu cupid, Kama.

Kali is Shakti, the great goddess, creating the three gunas: sattvas, rajas and tamas. The three gunas in their various permutation create all the fabric of the universe, including the five elements, skin, blood, etc..

These principles are the substance of she whose play (lila) is their modification. Kali is the first and foremost of the ten aspects of the goddess. She is pure sattvas, pure spirit.

A sadhaka (male) or a sadhika (female) can worship the goddess -- the Devi -- in any of ten forms for the fruition of desires. Her ten major forms are Kali, Tara, Shodasi, Bhuvaneshvari, Bhairavi, Chinnamasta, Dhumavati, Bagala, Matangi and Kamala. These aspects are known as the ten mahavidyas.

To a sadhaka, to know these is to know the universe, as she is both space and time and beyond these categories. Each form has its own dhyana (meditation), yantra (diagram), mantra (sound form) and sadhana (actions).

Mahavidya Kali is the primordial Devi who is the root of all the Great Knowledges (mahavidya). Worshipped by sadhakas and sadhikas, her outer forms are fearful. She destroys time, is time, and is the night of eternity.

Kali, certainly in the left hand tantrik tradition (vamachara), which is the path into Vama (woman and left) enters, is subject to much misunderstanding. The right hand path (dakshinachara) does not include the sexual component, while Vamachara allows sexual intercourse as part of her worship.

According to Sir John Woodroffe, in his introduction to the *Karpuradistotra*, which is a 22 verse hymn on Dakshina Kalika, pashus - those of a base disposition, are forbidden to engage in sexual sadhana at night. "The Pashu is still bound by the pasha (bonds) of desire, etc., and he is, therefore, not adhikari for that which, if undertaken by the unfit, will only make these bonds stronger." Verse 10 of the *Karpuradistotra* spells out the practice. "If by night, Thy devotee unclothed, with dishevelled hair, recites whilst meditating on Thee, thy mantra, when with his Shakti youthful, full-breasted, and heavy-hipped such an one makes all powers subject to him and dwells on the earth ever a seer." Worship of Kali is for the hero (vira) or a person of a highly spiritual nature (divya)

Kali's imagery is full of ambiguity, and this is deliberate on the part of the tantrik adepts who worshipped her.

As an example, according to some texts, the Kali sadhana takes place on a Tuesday, at midnight, in the cremation ground. Here, surrounded by jackals, owls and other uncanny creatures of the night, the sadhaka and his Shakti select a newly dead male corpse, which should be, according to the texts, of a young man preferably a king, a hero or a warrior. If he has recently died in battle, so much the better. Placing the corpse face downwards, the two draw the Kaliyantra on his back, offer each other food, wine and other good things, and then commence the act of ritual sex. At the close of intercourse, the man offers his Shakti one of her public hairs smeared with his semen and, if she is menstruating, blood.

Woodroffe says that the worship of Kali in the pashu mode is totally forbidden by Shiva, quoting the influential *Niruttara Tantra* as his source. "By the worship of Kali without Divyabhava and virabhava the worshipper suffers pain at every step and goes to hell. If a man who is of the Pashubhava worships Kali then he goes to the Raurava Hell until the time of final dissolution."

As to the matter of a suitable Shakti for the sexual rites of Kali, the NT suggests that when a sadhaka has already achieved success with his own Shakti, he may then worship another woman. But Woodroffe says this other woman is the supreme Shakti in the sadhaka's own body.

The cremation ground is often interpreted as the place where all desires are burnt away. Before realising kaivalya (liberation), the sadhaka must burn away all the taboos and conditionings which prevent this liberation.

The cremation ground (shmathana) is also the supreme nadi or channel within the human organism - the sushumna -- The central channel of bioenergy within the spine of a human being, the royal road of Kundalini.

There the Devi or goddess is coiled up three and a half times at the base of the spine. When she unfolds and enters the sushumna, the bliss of this cosmic orgasm causes the universe to disappear. On the sadhaka within the shmathana yantra is Shakti, both entwined in close sexual embrace. She is the human form of Kali, as he is the human form of Shiva. Both are forever united. The *Niruttara Tantra* says (2, 27) "The cremation ground is of two kinds, O Devi, the pyre and the renowned yoni. Shiva is the phallus, Kuleshani! So Mahakala said." Questioned later by Shri Devi in the same tantra, Shiva says that the vagina is Dakshina herself, in the form of the three gunas, the essence of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. These three forms represent the powers of creation, maintenance and destruction. They have their Shakti counterparts.

"When she has the semen of Shiva, she is Shiva-Shakti." (NT)

The *Karpuradistotra* comments on animal sacrifice. Male creatures may only be sacrificed to Kali, else she becomes furious. Verse 19 says that worshippers of Kali who sacrifice the flesh of cats, camels, sheep, buffaloes, goats and men to her become accomplished. A commentary by a Kaula, Vimalananda Svami, which Woodroffe only partially translates, claims these animals represent the six enemies with the goat representing lust, the buffalo anger, the cat greed, the sheep delusion, the camel envy. Man represents pride. However, according to other sources, only a king may perform the sacrifice of a man.

At the great temple of the Devi at Kamakhya in Assam, there is evidence that male human sacrifice was performed in the past. This site is renowned for Shakti worship because of a legend that Vishnu once cut the body of Shakti into 50 pieces with his discus. These parts represent the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet and are pithas (pedestals = sacred sites) of Devi. The yoni of Shakti fell at this spot, making it the most sacred of all.

Who, then, is Kali? Devi gives her own description in the *Kulachudamani*: "I am Great Nature, consciousness, bliss, the quintessence, devotedly praised. Where I am, there are no Brahma, Hara,

Shambhu or other devas, nor is there creation, maintenance or dissolution. Where I am, there is no attachment, happiness, sadness, liberation, goodness, faith, atheism, guru or disciple.

"When I, desiring creation, cover myself with my Maya (The great power of Shakti to delude all created things through Her play, ed.) and become triple and ecstatic in my wanton love play, I am Vikarini, giving rise to the various things.

"The five elements and the 108 lingams arise, while Brahma and the other devas, the three worlds, Bhur-Bhuvah-Svah (the three worlds) spontaneously come into manifestation.

"By mutual differences of Shiva and Shakti, the (three) gunas originate. All things, such as Brahma and so forth, are my parts, born from my being. Dividing and blending, the various tantras, mantras and kulas manifest. After withdrawing the five fold universe, I, Lalita, become of the nature of nirvana. Once more, men, great nature, egoism, the five elements, sattvas, rajas and tamas become manifested. This universe of parts appears and is then dissolved.

"O All-Knowing One, if I am known, what need is there for revealed scriptures and sadhana? If I am unknown, what use for puja and revealed text? I am the essence of creation, manifested as woman, intoxicated with sexual desire, in order to know you as guru, you with whom I am one. Even given this, Mahadeva, my true nature still remains secret."

The *Yogini Tantra* describes the goddess as the cosmic mother (Vishvamata), dark as a thunderstorm, wearing a garland and waistband of skulls, with dishevelled hair, completely naked (digambaram).

She has a rolling tongue, makes a terrifying roar, three reddened eyes, and has a wide open mouth. She wears a moon digit on her forehead, has the corpses of two boys as her earrings, and is adorned with various gems, which are of the brightness of the Sun and the Moon.

Laughing loudly, she has two streams of blood pouring from her mouth, while her throat is red with blood. In her four arms she holds cleaver, head, and makes mudras dispelling fears and granting boons. She, the supreme Nitya, is seated in reverse (viparita) intercourse with Mahakala upon the corpse of Shiva. The whole scene is set in the cremation ground.

## Chapter Twenty-Three

The hundred names of Kali.

## The Hundred Names of Kali

*O Devi, you are the measure and you measure. You are beyond measure and measurer. You are one in many forms. You are the form of the universe. I bow to you - Kaulavali Tantra.*

Here is the text and a translation of chapter 23 of the influential *Brihadnira Tantra*. If there are defects in my translation, I beg the indulgence of readers.

त्रयोविंशः पटलः

श्रीदेव्युवाच ।

पुरा प्रतिश्रुतं देव क्रीडासक्तो यदा भवान् ।

नाम्नां शतं महाकाल्याः कथयस्व मयि प्रभो ॥ १ ॥

श्रीभिरव उवाच ।

साधु पृष्टं महादेवि अकथ्यं कथयामि ते ।

न प्रकास्यं वरारोहे स्वयोनिरिव सुन्दरि ॥ २ ॥

Patala 23. Shri Devi said: Before, O Deva, when engaged in amorous play, you mentioned the 100 names of Kali. Lord, speak of this to me. Shri Bhairava said: Well asked, Mahadevi, I will tell you of that previously untold. Vararohi Sundari, you should conceal it like your own yoni. [1-2]

प्राणाधिकप्रियतरा भवती मम मोहिनी ।

क्षणमात्रं न जीवामि त्वां विना परमेश्वरि ॥ ३ ॥

यथादर्शोऽमले बिम्बं घृतं दध्यादिसंयुतम् ।

नथाहं जगतामाद्ये त्वयि सर्वत्र गोचरः ॥ ४ ॥

शृणु देवि प्रवक्ष्यामि जपात् सार्वज्ञदायकम् ।

सदाशिव ऋषिः प्रोक्तोऽनुष्टुप् छन्दश्च ईरितः ॥ ५ ॥

देवता भैरवो देवि पुरुषार्थचतुष्टये ।

Mohini, you who are as dear to me as life itself, I could not live for an instant without you, Parameshvari. [3] Like sight is inherent in the sun and as ghee is inherent in milk, so I, the Natha am everywhere present in you. [4] Listen Devi, I will speak to you of the japa giving all knowledge. Sadashiva is the rishi, it is said; Cchanda is the metre, [5] the devata is Bhairavi Devi, bestowing the four aims of mankind.

विनियोगः प्रयोक्तव्यः सर्वज्ञदायकम् ॥ ६ ॥

महाकाली जगद्धात्री जगन्माता जगन्मयी ।

जगदम्बा जगत्सारा जगदानन्दकारिणी १० ॥ ७ ॥

जगद्विध्वंसिनी गौरी दुःखदारिद्र्यनाशिनी ।

भैरवभाविनी भावानन्ता सारस्वातप्रदा ॥ ८ ॥

चतुर्वर्गप्रदा साध्वी सर्वमङ्गलमङ्गला ।

भद्रकाली २० विलाक्षी कामदात्री कलात्मिका ॥ ९ ॥

The application is that it gives all knowledge. [6] Mahakali Jagadhatri (creator of the world) Jaganmata (mother of the world) Jaganmayi (consisting of the world) Jagadamba (world mother) Jagatsara (essence of the world) Jagadanandakarini (cause of bliss in the world) [7] Jagadvighnasini (destroyer of world)

obstacles) Gauri (golden one) Dukhadaridyanashini (destroyer of unhappiness and poverty) Bhairavabhavini Bhavananta Sarasvataprada (bestower of eloquence). [8] Chaturvargaprada (giver of the four aims) Sadhvi (holy) Sarvamangalamangala (greatest fortune of all) Bhadrakali Vilakshi Kamadatri (giving desires) Kalatmika (self of kalas) [9]

नीलवाणी महागौरसर्वाङ्गा सुन्दरीपरा ।  
सर्वसंपत्प्रदा भीमनादिनी वरवर्णिनी ॥ १० ॥  
वारारोहा ३० शिवरुहा महिषासुरधातिनी ।  
शिवमूज्या शिवप्रीता दानवेन्द्रप्रपूजिता ॥ ११ ॥  
सर्ववद्यामयी सर्वसर्वभीष्टफलप्रदा ।  
कोमलाङ्गी विधात्री विधातुवरदायिनी ४० ॥ १२ ॥  
पूर्णेन्दुवदना नीलमेघवर्णा कपालिनी ।

Nilavani (blue Sarasvati) Mahagaurasarvanga (greatly golden in all limbs) Sundaripara (supremely beautiful) Sarvasampatprada (giver of all prosperity) Bhimanadini (sounding terrifying) Varavarnini [10] Vararoha Shivaruha (riding Shiva) Mahishasuradhatini Shivapujya (worshipped by Shiva) Shivaprita (loved by Shiva) Danavendraprapujita (worshipped by Danavas)[11] Sarvavidyamayi (consisting of all vidya) Sarvasarvabhishthalapada (giver of the fruit of every possible desire) Komalangi (soft of limbs) Vidhatri (creatix) Vidhatrivaradayini (giver of boons in creation) [12] Purnenduvadana (with a face like the full moon) Nilameghavarna (the colour of a blue rain-cloud) Kapalini

कुरुकुला प्रिचित्ता कान्तचित्ता मदोन्मदा ॥ १३ ॥  
मत्ताङ्गी मदनप्रीता मदाघूर्णितलोचना ५० ।  
मदोत्तीर्णा खर्परसिनरमुण्डविलासिणी ॥ १४ ॥  
नरमुण्डस्रजा देवी खड्गहस्ता भयानका ।  
अट्टहासयुता पद्मा पद्मरागोपशोभिता ॥ १५ ॥  
वराभयप्रदा ६० काली कालरात्रिस्वरूपिणी ।  
स्वधा स्वाहा वषट्कारा शरदिन्दुसमप्रभा ॥ १६ ॥

Kurukulla Viprachitta Kantachitta Madonmada (drunk with desire) [13] Matangi (elephant lady) Madanaprita Madaghurnitalochana (eyes full of desire) Madottirna Kharparasinaramundavilasini [14] Naramundasraja (with a necklace of men's heads) Devi Khadgahasta (holding a cleaver) Bhayanaka (giving fear) Attahasayuta (laughing loudly) Padma (lotus) Padmaragopashobhita [15] Karabhayaprada (hand removing fear) Kali Kalaratrisvarupini (true form of the night of time) Svadha Svaha Vashatkara Saradindusamaprabha (as bright as the autumn moon)[16]

शरत्ज्योत्सना संह्लादा विपरीतरतातुरा ।  
 मुक्तकेशी ७० छिन्नजटा जटाजूटविलगिनी ॥ १७ ॥  
 सर्पराजयुतभीमा सर्पराजोपरिस्थिता ।  
 श्मशानस्था महानन्दिस्तुता संदीप्तलोचना ॥ १८ ॥  
 शवासनरता नन्दा सिद्धचारणसेविता ८० ।  
 बलिदानप्रिया गर्भा भूर्भुवःस्वःस्वरूपिणी ॥ १९ ॥  
 गायत्री सावित्री महानीलसरस्वती ।

Sharatjyotsna (light of the autumn moon) Samhlada Viparitaratatura (addicted to taking the superior sexual role) Muktakeshi (dishevelled of hair) Cchinnejata Jatajutavilasini [17] Sarvarajayutabhima Sarvarajoparisthata Shmashanstha (dwelling in the cremation ground) Mahanandistuta (praised by Mahanandi) Samdiptalochana [18] Shavasanasarata (addicted to the corpse asana) Nanda Siddhacharanasevita (served by Siddhacharas) Balidanapriya (fond of animal sacrifice) Garbha (the womb) Bhurbhuvahsvavarupini (true form of Bhurbhuvahsva)[19] Gayatri Savitri Mahanilasarasvati

लक्ष्मीर्लक्षणसंयुक्ता सर्वलक्षणलक्षिता ॥ २० ॥  
 व्याघ्रचर्मवृता ९० मध्या त्रिवलीवलवाञ्छिता ।  
 गन्धर्वैः संस्तुता सा हि तथा चेन्दा महापरा ॥ २१ ॥  
 पवित्रा परमा माया महामाया महोदया १०० ।  
 इति ते कथितं दिव्यं शतं नाम्नां महेश्वरि ॥ २२ ॥  
 यः पठत् प्रातरुत्थाय स तु ध्यानिधिर्भवत् ।  
 इह लोके सुखं भुक्त्वा देवीसायुज्यमानुयात् ॥ २३ ॥

Lakshmiralakshanasamyukta (showing all the signs of Lakshmi) Sarvalakshanalakshita (having every single characteristic)[20] Vyaghracharmavrita (wearing tiger skin) Madhya Trivalivalayanchita Gandharvaihsamstutasa (praised by the Gandharvas) hi Inda Mahapara (greatly supreme one) [21] Pavitra Parama (supreme) Maya Mahamaya Mahodaya. Maheshvari, so to you are declared the 100 celestial names [22] Whosoever reads these at morning time for certain gains a treasure. Here in this world, he is happy and afterwards attains union with Devi. [23]



तस्य वश्या भवन्त्येते सिद्धौघाः सचराचराः ।  
 स्वैचरा भूचराश्चैव तथा स्वर्गचराश्च ये ॥ २४ ॥  
 ने सर्वे व्रजनात्तान्ति साधकस्य हि नान्यथा ।  
 नाम्नां वरं महेशानि परित्याज्य सहस्रकम् ॥ २५ ॥  
 पठितव्यं शतं देवि चतुर्वर्गफलप्रदम् ।  
 अज्ञात्वा परमेशानि नाम्नां शतं महेश्वरि ॥ २६ ॥  
 भजते यो महाकालीं सिद्धिर्नास्ति कलौ युगे ।

He cannot be subjugated by siddhas, aughas, all which moves and does not move, whether they move on earth, in space or in heaven. [24] The names are called 'Boon', Maheshani and one may give up the 1000 (names). [25] One should recite the 100 (names) Devi, the giver of the fruit of the four aims (of mankind). O Parameshani, without knowing these 100 names [26], there is no siddhi from Mahakali in this Kali Yuga.

प्रपठेत् प्रयत्नो भक्त्या तस्य पुण्यफलं शृणु ॥ २७ ॥  
 लक्षवर्षसहस्रस्य कालीपूजाफलं भवेत् ।  
 बहुना किमिहोक्तेन चाञ्जिनाथी भविष्यति ॥ २८ ॥

One who recites with devotion gains good results, listen! [27] He gains the results of hundreds of millions of Kalipujas. What use of more words? He will become the desired. [28]

## Chapter Twenty-Four

Describes the worship of Devi Annapurna (Full of Food) and gives her mantra and the hundred names