



## *From the Teachings of Swami Lakshmanjoo*

Swami Lakshmanjoo (1907-1991) was one of the foremost expounders of Kashmir's Krama tradition, and was an inspiration to both Indian and Western scholars and seekers. He was the last in an unbroken chain of masters from the Oral Tradition of what is today known as Kashmir Shaivism.

In January of 1991, just even months before his passing, Swamiji visited Los Angeles. One sunny afternoon, while listening to a group of devotees singing bhajans in praise of Mother Divine, he went into an ecstatic mood. Moving about the room he enticed everybody to dance. As the fervour of the singing gained momentum Swamiji moved gracefully to the center of the room, eyes brimming with tears. He began to outline the shape of a figure, invisible to all but himself. After sometime he motioned to each devotee and showered him or her with what appeared to be blessing from the unknown visitor.

Swamiji remained in an ecstatic mood for the remainder of that day, and late in the evening before retiring he confided in a quiet tone, "Goddess Durga appeared today in the meeting room downstairs." For Swami Lakshmanjoo the vision of Goddess Durga was not to be taken as something extraordinary. There was no doubt that the Divine Mother had graciously woven Herself into the fabric of his life since early childhood. He did add though, with a tone of humor mixed with an air of surprise, "Goddess Durga...visited America!"

Some fifty years earlier, in his humble ashram, nestled quietly on the side of a mountain overlooking beautiful Dal Lake, Swamiji had compiled a small booklet entitled *Kramanaya Pradipika*. Based on the ancient Krama System of Kashmir Shaivism, this booklet shed light on the essential meaning of the twelve aspects of Kali.

In Kashmir Shaivism, Kali in Her highest embodiment is known as *Kalankarshini*. Like a divine actress in her own universal play, She assumes the roles of Sristi Kali, Rakta Kali, Sthitinasha Kali, Yama Kali, Samhara Kali, Mrityu Kali, Rudra Kali, Martanda Kali, Paramarka Kali, Kalagnirudra Kali, Mahakala Kali and Maha-bhairava-ghora-canda Kali. Through these twelve manifestations the Divine Mother Kali creates, maintains and destroys the universe from within Her own nature.

In Sristi Kali She is ever present as the first impulse of any perception. In Rakta Kali She is direct perception. In Sthitinasha Kali She is the appeased state where the curiosity of perception has ended. In Yama Kali She winds up the state of thinking and perceiving and again resides in her own nature. These four states of Kali operate in the objective world.

In Samhara Kali the impressions of the objective world appear as faint clouds in a clear blue sky. Here one feels, "I have destroyed duality." In the state of Mrityu Kali these clouds disappear and one begins to feel oneness. In Rudra Kali She destroys all remaining doubts and suspicions that hold one back on the path to God consciousness. And in Martanda Kali She absorbs the



energies of cognition into Herself. These four states of Kali operate in the cognitive world.

In Paramarka Kali She is that state in which the limited ego, which holds the twelve organs of cognition, is dissolved. For the state of Kalagnirudra Kali Swamiji added this verse.

“Glory be to Thee, O Ambika, Mother of the Universe! By the power of Your unimpeded will and time in the shape of Bhairava, Thou createst the entire universe from the highest Shiva to the lowest insect.”

Here in the state of Kalagnirudra Kali the function of time still exists. However, when She enters the state of Mahakala Kali, just like a morsel of food, in one gulp She digests time, along with the totality of the universe. It is here that Kali dances in the universal cremation ground. In her twelfth and final state She is known as Maha-bhairava-ghora-canda Kali. Here the effulgent light of supreme consciousness, responsible for manifesting the subjective, objective and cognitive worlds is held in a state of oneness. These final four states of Kali operate in the field of pure subjectivity.

In Kashmir Shaivism, Kalasankarshini Kali is also nominated as Para-Bhairava. Here She is the thread of ‘supreme awareness’ that runs through the twelve beads of perception, or states of consciousness which span from the grossest to the subtlest level of creation.

In a verse from the *Kramakeli*, penned down by the great 10th century Shaiva saint Abhinavagupta, Swami Lakshmanjoo explains, “It is Kalasankarshini Kali in the form of Mahakali who dances on the body of Lord Shiva.”

Why is She dancing on Shiva?

Swamiji tells us: “this formation of Shiva is known as ‘Mahakala’ the lord of time and death. By simply knitting her eyebrows, His better half, ‘Mahakali’ has shattered the universe into pieces and digested all time and space in her own nature. Here there is no past, present or future, nothing is born and nothing dies, therefore Shiva as Lord of time and death surrenders totally and enjoys the blissful touch of Mahakali’s lotus feet. It is to this Universal Mother that one must surrender everything, as She is the real Mother protecting everybody. You should take refuge in Her at any cost and everything will be fine.”

Swamiji added: “by the grace of God, by the grace of the Master, by the grace of the sacred scriptures, or by the grace of one’s own one-pointed practice, the aspirant who has understood the ‘trick of awareness’ becomes liberated in no time.” The recipient of such grace soon realizes the Divine Mother is not far away in some seventh heaven, but is in fact the very essence of one’s own being. For this aspirant there is nowhere to go to realize the Divine, as She is closer to oneself than one’s own breath.



This divine play of Shiva and Shakti is beautifully expressed in the first verse the *Shiva Dristhi*:

asmadrupa samāviṣṭaḥ svātmanātmanivāraṇe /

śivaḥ karotu nijayā namaḥ śaktyātatātmane // Śivadrṣṭi 1.1.

“One bows to universal Shiva who is one’s own nature, through the avenue of Shakti (his energy), for the removal of obstacles, which in reality are none other than Shiva.”

It is through Shakti that Shiva is realized, and for one whose awareness has expanded to embrace the true nature of the play of the Universal Mother, the daily routine of everyday life becomes the real means of worship.

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