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GODDESS KALI AS THE EPITOME OF FEMINISM

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Abstract

Hindu goddess Kali represents the *adishakti* or the beginning of all the energy persistent in the creation. That's why she is revered as a mother figure in Hindu mythology. But she does not symbolize the 'motherliness' that we generally associate with in the contemporary society. she is a protector as she establishes good over evil but her method is different. She becomes agitated, becomes naked, becomes destructive, slits the heads of *asuras*, makes a garland with their severed head and then wears that garland, raising a 'kharga' to kill more, she is bloodthirsty and ferocious, indomitable and invincible. She is basically opposite of what we think of the qualities and activities of a complacent mother figure. In this world when everyday, everywhere women are screaming about their rights, protesting against any kind of discrimination, taking actions against any type of injustice, Goddess Kali has the power to empower them all with her natural infinite source of energy.

Introduction

Kali, the name is powerful enough to fill the heart of any woman with unfathomable courage and strength. In this research paper some of her traits will be evaluated to understand the true essence and ethos of the Goddess. She is one and unique. Her qualities can fill the women of contemporary society with self-esteem and confidence. The ethos of Goddess Kali has the power to inculcate great values and strength at the core. If the women of new India deeply think about her, they will find her as a powerhouse who can break any stereotypical thought, any prejudice against women. She is the volcanic power and realizing

that power can invigorate them, re-energize them. In this paper her different aspects will be revitalized to understand the full value of women.

Kali, the Image of Force:

In the article , *Kali: In Praise of the Goddess* Michael A. Marsman quotes from D.R. Kinsley where Kali is described as, " having a terrible, frightening appearance. She is always black or dark, is usually naked, and has long disheveled hair. She is adorned with severed arms as a girdle, freshly cut heads as a necklace, children's corpses as earrings, and serpents as bracelets. She has long, sharp fangs, is often

depicted as having claw-like hands with long nails, and is often said to have blood smeared on her lips. Her favorite haunts heighten her fearsome nature. She is usually shown on the battlefield, where she is a furious combatant who gets drunk on the hot blood of her victims, or in a cremation ground, where she sits on a corpse surrounded by jackals and goblins."

This is a terrible image of power and energy. When we talk about *Shakti* Goddess Durga automatically comes in our mind. Goddess Kali is another form of Goddess Durga. Durga, the Goddess of energy is known to be extremely beautiful woman. Durga has set a standard for women. She has ten hands with all the hands being used simultaneously for different works. Similarly, women are supposed to be and sometimes pressurized to be multitasker, having multidimensional qualities. Women are supposed to be taking most of the responsibilities at home. A woman working outside has some added pressure. In order to fulfil her multidimensional role as a woman she is constantly exhausted, sometimes even scrutinized and blamed for doing something imperfectly. She has to manage everything compromising her physical and mental well-being. Whereas Goddess Kali gives a different aura. She has four hands but her hands are occupied with the heads of wrongdoers, fire, weapons etc. Goddess Durga has weapons in her hands too but she also has lotus and conch signalling some softer aspects ignited in her, whereas Kali is focused, occupied with a single mission, extinction of evil.

There is Goddess Laxmi, who is worshipped as the goddess of wealth. But she resides inside the home. The idea of bringing innumerable wealth sitting at a certain place is quite impractical. Moreover, she is attributed with most of the most 'feminine' qualities like speaking in a low voice, walking slowly, never fighting, being docile and shy. Most of the Indian families want their daughter or the daughter in law to be exactly a replica of Goddess Laxmi. But Kali is born to fight. she is

irresistible. Not willing to listen to others her demeanour arises awe, fear and terror in the mind of the observer. So, every woman in India instead of listening to the taming voices of the society should listen fearlessly into what her heart believes. What she truly wants to execute in life, she should go ahead with determination. Good education can ensure a good career and Kali being the foremost goddess possesses the ocean of knowledge. In a world where everyone wants to instruct her, dominate her she need to show the world her indomitable self and must proceed with utmost knowledge and confidence.

Her dark skin is a threat to the beauty standards that Indian society has set up. The ridiculous standards that measure the beauty of a woman with only her physical appearance is never acceptable. The inner strength, the sharpness of mind should always be counted. But unfortunately, many women in India suffer from low self-esteem as they are constantly being reminded of their dark skin colour through several taunts and rude comments from their relatives, friends and even their own family members. This attitude leads to even depression. Many women start to believe that they are not worthy to be seen or praised. They are in qualms that in order to have a marriable groom she needs to have fair complexion. Talent is only a secondary quality for a woman for future prospect but her beauty is the primary criteria. So, darkness of her outer layer starts to sink in to the inner layers of her spirit. But Kali is not bothering about the looks she has. She is only concentrating on her goal and that to eradicate evil from the world. She is dark and divine. The Indian girls should also realize the connection to divinity within them. So that the money that they spend unnecessarily on different cosmetics can be utilized properly for real education to make a responsible and knowledgeable citizen of the society.

Kali is represented in both blue and black colours in several mythological stories. The blue colour also symbolizes the ocean.

Ocean signifies water where life begins. So, in 'Kali' two dialectical concepts are juxtaposed—she is the root of creation, she is the destroyer also. So, contemporary women should learn from her how to nourish the uniqueness in her, to believe in her, to connect and empathize with others but at the same time to roar against any type of injustice, evil in society. Women in India belongs to diverse lingual, cultural backgrounds with different features. All should celebrate their unique beauty realize their true potential. Indian ancient philosophy always believes that truth is beauty.

Women body is highly commodified in the country. It is constantly being scrutinized. Again, just like the complexion people are unnecessarily concerned about the ideal body shape of a woman. Society knows exactly how much flesh is needed at which body parts. If the woman is too thin or too fat people starts to criticize her relentlessly. Every woman feels like a panopticon as if constantly being watched to fit into the exact shape and size. Bollywood movies are setting some hyperreal image of perfection which is almost unachievable in real life. It generates lots of complexes in the psyche of women. Obviously being health conscious and staying fit is essential but it should not be associated with looks. Women are obsessively falling into the trap of various unhealthy drinks to keep themselves in certain shapes. The exaggerated pressure of marriage is looming over their head. But here again comes Kali. She is also judged for the dresses she wears. But she is also worshipped. Quite contrarily in contemporary society women are advised to cover most parts of the body so that the sexual desire of a man is not titillated. Whenever anything untoward happens it is the woman who is always blamed. Even when she is beaten, raped then also she is blamed. Kali, her iconography is so strikingly rebellious of the societal judgements. She is fiercely naked. She is raw. she is wild. Goddess Kali is also named as 'digambari', means clad in space. She is 'kala' means time. So, nothing can bind her, she is

truth so nothing can cover or hide her. She is infinite so no cloth is sufficient enough to wrap her. She symbolizes blood and death. In this world what is more real than death? She is knowledge and knowledge should radiate. Moreover, she is the source of purity, she has transcended all worldly attachments that's why she is naked. Again, kali has this dynamic approach. She is innocent and naked, pure and dreadful.

One of the most famous images of Goddess Kali is where she is standing on her husband's chest with her tongue out and her hands holding different weapons and head of a demon. She is someone who takes her own decision. In most of the Indian households a woman is always supposed to be dependent. Before marriage she is under the 'protection' of her father and after marriage she is supposed to be dependent on her husband listening to all the orders of him. But Goddess Kali, when infuriated by the misdeeds of the demon takes her own decision to finish the trace of all the 'asuras'. One of her another popular image is where she drinks the blood of the demon whose blood if falls on the ground will generate some more demons. But she decides to eat up all the blood dripping from Asura so that they can be completely destroyed. Its her own decision to do so. She does not want or await for her husband's permission or any advice. Nor does she request her husband to join her in the mighty war as she knows that she is self-sufficient. She knows that she is unconquerable. She is busy killing the demons but once all demons are finished she still releases destructive energies. She becomes so much infuriated that she is unstoppable. All the world is on the verge of doomsday if she is not stopped by someone. She was proceeding further doing her dance of death when her husband Shiva comes in her way and lies there.

Shiva, the supreme God could have used any special effect to control her. Or as a husband he could order his wife to stop the war, but he also comes silently and lies smilingly on the ground. Goddess Kali in her destructive

approach unknowingly keeps her feet on her husband's chest. Her further road is blocked by him. She looks downwards and finds her husband there. It was so unexpected and uncomfortable that she immediately opens up her mouth and brings out her tongue. She has a certain trust and respect for her husband. Lord Shiva was wise enough to not say any word and lie beneath her legs. Goddess Kali also immediately understands the message. She is mortified for her indiscriminate action and stops the war. The incident is full of love and respect for each other but this mutual understanding and respect is missing in many relationships in today's society. A highly 'educated', elite class groom also does not hesitate to take dowry and treats women as his inferior. He avoids showing signs of respect because his male ego can be hurt easily. He thinks that before taking any serious decision his wife should always consult him just to prioritize him. Sometimes he thinks she doesn't have enough knowledge to take her own decision.

Goddess Kali is always seen outside doing the work that she is best at doing, killing the monsters and erase evil. But in twenty first century also women sometimes are not 'allowed' to work outside. It is considered inappropriate for a woman who works late at night. But Goddess Kali is in function whenever needed. She is not frowned upon. So, the little time that the life offers to all, everyone should respect it. Women if its comfortable for them to work extra-time for the betterment of her workplace, or the country she should always opt for it. In society some jobs are treated as jobs suitable for women like teaching, nursing, medical etc. But through Goddess Kali we can observe how great warrior she is. So, if any woman is passionate to be a soldier or a spy she should progress to fulfil her dream.

Conclusion

Goddess Kali is a force. It can be rightfully said she is the epitome of truth. She is the energy to establish virtue over vices. she

embraces unique manifestation of beauty. She is lofty in her thoughts and ultimate in her decision. She is complete by herself. If all the woman in the world starts to exhibit power and confidence like her the world cannot cultivate any discrimination against them. Women must retaliate against any injustice, empower themselves with willpower and education. Women must shed off any hesitation to become the best version of themselves and start to radiate.

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