

34. Kâli - Doerga and the Nagas

Bleeker, *The mother goddess in antiquity*, pp 126-136.

Typically pre-Indian is the reverence for Devi, the goddess, also called Maha-devi, the Great Goddess.

In her being, three traits stand out:

1) she possesses an ambivalent nature. She is charming and generous, but also horrible and cruel. She attracts and repels. She arouses affection and fear. Both these aspects of her being are best referred to by the names Lakshmi and Kali;

2) She appears in different forms and under all kinds of names. 2) she appears in different forms and under all kinds of names, sometimes as an elevated or awe-inspiring goddess, sometimes as the noble lady, who faithfully accompanies her husband, the hero of the epic, in all his trials and tribulations;

3) she is both a virgin and a mother. This polarity in her being is indeed the typical characteristic of the divine Lady.

Lakshmi, also called Sri, is the deity of prosperity, wealth, happiness. (...) Lakshmi is said to mean mark. She personifies the omen, the certainty of fortune and happiness.(...) She is especially famous as the partner of Vishnu (he who sustains the world), who forms a trinity with Brahma (the creator) and Shiva (the destroyer).(...). She acts as consort of Vishnu (like Vishnu) in ten appearances; then she is the so-called Shakti, i.e. the energy of the god, the creative power (magical, erotic, spiritual), the influence of the deity radiating to the world. (Note: many gods have a Shakti as a companion). Next to Vishnu, on whom the world rests, the god-reliever, no one fits better than Lakshmi, the generous giver of everything that makes life rich.

Kali is one of the many names of the Shakti of Shiva, a god with a demonic character, i.e. he is the giver and also the destroyer of life. On the one hand he is a god of fertility and procreation, on the other he is considered the great ascetic, who, half naked, smeared with ashes and surrounded by skulls, devotes himself intensely to meditation. His passion can also be expressed in an orgiastic dance. It is often depicted how he dances standing on conquered demon in a circle of flames: the image of his activity as destroyer of the world. Since, according to Pre-Indian understanding, the world is doomed to periodic destruction, this is also a divine task.

The ominous aspect contemplates in his Shakti alongside Durga (the unapproachable), Kumari (the virgin), Uma (the benevolent) and Gauri (the golden), calling her Candi (the impetuous) and Kali (the black).

As Durga, she is a beautiful young maiden holding a blue lotus flower, standing on a tiger or lion.

As Kali, she is depicted as an ugly old woman, with four arms, with snakes and skulls around her neck. In Kali, the lurid side of the Pre-Indian Mother Goddess has taken persona. Kali fights and conquers the demons.

In essence, she is a horrific goddess, who takes pleasure in war and destruction, who demands bloody sacrifices.

The cult the people devote to her has a dark and grisly character. She is zealously invoked for help. For the goddess who chastises is also considered capable of offering salvation. Especially in popular belief she possesses this demonic character.

In the purified piety the Shakti of Shiva is regarded as the world-mother, who exists from eternity to eternity and who repeatedly reveals herself for the salvation of the world.” (Von Glasenapp, *The Non-Christian Religions*, pp 128 140).

Of the impermanent gods of the Hindu pantheon, Brahma lives the longest. When his 100 years are up, his world system perishes. A Brahma day or kalpa comprises 1000 major epochs (mahajoega), each of which consists of 4 world epochs (juga), known as Krita, Treta, Dwapara and Kali. In the first juga, happy conditions generally prevail and people are righteous and truthful.

In each subsequent juggernaut, conditions worsen until finally in the last, the Kali juggernaut, both the general and moral conditions in the world reach their greatest nadir. Finally, a happy era begins, which in due course must give way to the next, worse one.

We are now in the twilight (= beginning period) of the Kalijuga, which began on February 17, 3102 B.C., with the death of Krishna.

It is wrong to place Shiva as the evil god against the “good” Vishnu. Shiva's consort, often called Durga (the difficult one to access), also has her wild and also mild aspects. On the one hand, she is, especially in her gruesome stature as Kali (the black one), the terrible fighter of demons, to whom people used to offer human sacrifices to appease her. On the other hand, she is praised as the kind mother, who cares for living beings with food.

About the sects read pp 138-140: the nagas are not mentioned, but there is a.o. mention of the wirashaiwas (also called lingajats, because they carry a linga (phallus) in a case (= tube, box for an object that fits in its shape) around the neck; they see in Shiwa the first cause of everything) and the shaktas (i. e. followers of the Shiwa, the sects of the gods). i.e. followers of the shakti (power): they see in Doerga the mother and ruler of the world. They follow the ritual of the tantras, which also has secret festivities in which five things beginning with M are considered sacraments: wine (mada), fish (matsja), meat (mansa), cereal (moesda) and sexual intercourse (maithoena).

With regard to the Asian primitive tribal religions we read on p. 227: “For the Nagas in the back of India the use of megalithic monuments (= giant stones) in the cult of the dead is particularly characteristic. The transition from one of the five age classes to another is celebrated by special “rites de passage”.”

Source: *The whole world in words and pictures*, pp 284-293, Great Dutch Larousse Encyclopedia, vol 16-p 630 and Wouters, *Peoples and Ethnology*, p 216.

Naga = people in (the state of) Nagaland Part of Assam, N.O. –prov. of India, bordering Tibet, Bangladesh and Burma).

= primitive tribes of the mountainous region of Assam; headhunters.
= in Hindu mythology, the name for a sizeable group of demi-godly beings with a human upper body and the lower body of a snake.

The naga resided in the underground city of Bhogavati, where they guarded great riches, which they sometimes transferred to mortals. Sometimes a naga could assume an entirely human form and a female naga (nagi or nagini) then had the reputation of extraordinary beauty. Several Indian royal houses prided themselves on being descended from a mortal hero and a nagini. It is possible that the primitive peoples encountered by the Aryans in India Warden can be considered prototypes of the naga. On the other hand, the naga were already worshipped in such a distant past, and the worship of snakes is so widespread, that the belief in the naga probably stems from the snake worship of the Pre-Aryan peoples.

Van der Zuylen, *Mysteries and Initiations in Antiquity*, p 92....

The Indians are the oldest Indo-Germanic people, i.e., of the Indo-Germanic peoples living today, Indian constitutes the oldest admixture of Aryans with non-Aryans.

The invading, warlike (Aryan) pastoral tribes (later called Skytthen or Sarmatians) presumably easily overcame the peaceful arable-wielding Drawidas. (...) Morals and religion of the conquered people were largely lost, but their appearance over the centuries left an indelible mark on that of the victors, who also adopted some of the Drawida religion, including the Destroyer Shiwa and the Goddess of Death Kali.

The *Bhagavad-Gita*, p 408.

Kali-yuga = era (yuga) of struggle and hypocrisy, last in a cycle of four (maha-yuga); it amounts to 432 000 years.

The present Kali-yuga began 5000 years ago. (...) It is mainly characterized by an ever more rapid degeneration of the religious life and by the phenomenon that one only shows material needs.

Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, pp 23-26 (divine archetypes of rituals), pp 102-118 (cosmic cycles and history) and pp 118-124 (destiny and history).

Concerning kali-yuga “To the gradual decrease in duration which occurs with each new yuga, corresponds on the human level a shortening of the life span, which in turn is accompanied by an ever-increasing moral degeneration and a deterioration of the mental faculties. This gradual decay on all planes - the biological, intellectual, ethical, social, etc. - is particularly sharply delineated in the Purana texts (cf. e.g. Vayau-purana 1.8; Vishnu purana VI.3).

The transition from one yuga to another takes place in the course of a “twilight cycle” (see table of numerical data at Von Glasenapp), which also expresses a decrescendo within each yuga itself, insofar as each of them ends with a period of darkness. As the end of the cycle, i.e. the fourth and final yuga approaches, the “darknesses” become denser.

As a matter of fact, the kali-yuga - the one in which we now find ourselves - is considered the “age of darkness” par excellence. The complete cycle ends with an “under-gang,” a pralaya, which will be repeated in an even more profound way (maha-pralaya, the “Great Under-gang,” at the end of the thousandth cycle. (cfr. Eliade, p 104).

Due to the simple fact that we are now living in the kali-yuga, i.e. in the “age of dark-nisms”, which is dominated by dissolution and will end with catastrophe, we are destined to suffer more than the people of the preceding “ages”. Now, at our historical moment, we have nothing else to expect; at the most (and here we come up against the soteriological function of the kali-yuga and the advantages that a history marked by the “twilight” and the catastrophe offers us) we can tear ourselves away from cosmic slavery.

The Indian theory of the four “epochs” therefore strengthens and comforts man who is under the pressure of history. After all:

1) the sorrows that fall to him, because he lives in the “twilight” based on dissolution, help him to see the predicament of his human existence and thus facilitate his liberation;

2) and on the other hand, the theory justifies and justifies the suffering of the person who does not decide to liberate himself, but who, on the contrary, resigns himself to passively undergoing his existence, and this because he is aware of the dramatic and catastrophic structure of the era in which he has to live (or rather, to revive). (Cfr. Eliade, p 108).

According to Indian conceptions every man of the kali-yuga is prompted to seek his spiritual freedom and bliss, without, however, being able to avoid the eventual downfall of this “twilight” world in its entirety. (Cfr. Eliade, p 119)

Mythology of the whole world (illustrated encycl.) pp 24-30.

Concerning the age of Kali: see pp 24-26.

Concerning Shiva (as destroyer on the day of judgment (with the dance of universal death)), the death of Death, the great yogi and god of ascetics, fertility god, god of phallus or linga, Lord of dance (bringing chaos) and his symbols or attributes (as god of death he lives on the earth of corpse burnings, surrounded by unclean jackals and even takes the form of a corpse in later Tantric iconography: he is also depicted with a sheath in his hand (murder)), as well as with the moon (rebirth) and the river Ganges (fertility) in his hair: p. 28.

Shiva as harmony of opposites (he is both creator, and destroyer, erotic and ascetic, gentle and evil): p. 28 (myth of Andhaka).

Concerning the Goddess, a.o. Kali: see pp 29 and 30 (with picture).

List of Hindu Gods and Mythological Creatures: p.32.

The classical myth of the birth of the goddess reads:

“The dead were tormented by a buffalo demon who could not be killed by any (manly) god. From the rage that raged in their bodies came waves of energy from which the Goddess was formed. She beheaded the demon, whereby his soul was released from the demonic body in which it was confined.”

Tantric worshipers of the Goddess, in particular, add an epilogue to the story of Daksha's sacrifice:

“After Sati committed suicide, Shiva roamed around the corpse, dancing and weeping, thus stirring the earth until Vishnu tore the corpse to pieces. Wherever a body part of Sati fell, an altar to the goddess appeared. The holiest altar was in Assam, where the genitals (yoni) of the goddess fell. This dance of death appears in reverse form in Bengal (East Pakistan, W. of Assam), where it is told that the Goddess in her hideous guise of the bloodthirsty Kali danced on the corpse of her husband, Shiva. By doing so, she gives him back his life, transforming the corpse (Shava) into Silva, the living god.”

One myth explains the apparent schizophrenia of the Goddess: “Shiva, whose body is covered with white ash, once denounced his wife for her dark skin color. Out of shame and rage, she became ascetic until the blessing of golden skin (her merciful, maternal aspect as Gauri, mother of Skanda) was bestowed upon her. She, like snakes, stripped off her black skin, and that outer layer became the cruel goddess Kali.

Daniélou, Shiva et Dionysos.

La déesse puissance, amante et mère (pp 97-111)

The goddess Shiva is the ideator of the world. In order to realize his plan, he needs an executive (=executive power), a material force, an 'energy' (Shakti).

The Multiple Aspects of the Goddess: Whatever aspect of the world we consider, at its base we find an energy, a shakti, which is an aspect of the universal Shakti.

The Lady of the Mountain: The main name of the goddess is Pârvâti (she of the mountain), because the mountain peaks are considered the points through which the energy of the earth rises to the sky.

The power of time: the goddess, through her relationship with Shiva, enables the manifestation of divine eros.

In relation to man, however, she can appear as the matrix, the mother from whom everything comes and to whom everything ultimately returns. She is then identified with Kâtli, “the power of time,” of death. Shiva in his terrible aspect is equated with Kala, time, the Kronos of the Greeks. Kâli, the power of time, of death, also called Durga, the unapproachable, represents the terrible aspect of the goddess. She appears dancing on a destroyed world with the attributes of Shiva the destroyer, a necklace of skulls, snakes. She is surrounded by demons. She kills everything that approaches her. It is she, therefore, who must be invoked to obtain respite. Her cult, associated with Tantrism, is very widespread.

It is a very important branch of the Shiva tradition, incorporated into Mahayana Buddhism.

Eroticism and bloody sacrifices play an important role in the worship of the terrible goddess, who in some parts of India, especially Bengal, is the main deity worshipped today.

To her were sacrificed the heads of enemy warriors (= prisoners of war) killed in battle.

We recognize the image of Kali, represented with necklaces of skulls, in erotic union with Shiva.

Massacre and slaughter are characteristic features of the archaic goddesses. There are parallels in myths of the Irish Celts, Egypt and Canaan. (...)

Death is a return to the mother's womb, to the earth from which we spring. Kâlî alone is invoked by her followers as "Mother", as protector, the almighty of Time.

Sati (faithfulness), the mistress of animals, the marriage of Shiva and Pârvatî: pp.103- 111.

Tantrism or Orgiasm (pp.187-197):

The Tantric method reproduces in man himself the history of evolution. Any attempt at experience that does not take into account the nature of the living being in its totality is illusory, especially at the end of the evolutionary cycle, the Kali Yuga, where an apparent development of certain mental faculties corresponds in fact to an overall reduction of intuitive perceptions, of vital force, and in fact to a decadence that heralds the death of the species.

The divine lies beyond the apparent limits of the living being, both below and above the created. To overcome the barriers that hold us captive, to free ourselves, to get closer to the divine, we can take one path or the other. The Shivaic path is the Tantric, Tamasic path, which takes as its starting point the bodily functions and the seemingly negative, destructive, sensual aspects of the human animal, while the Sattvic path uses asceticism, virtue, intellect as its tools. The Sattvic path is considered ineffective in the Kali Yuga. (...) Tantrism foresaw a problem perfectly suited to the present times. It predicted the phase of the last age, the Kali Yuga, whose essential features as an age (as far as) of dissolution are undoubtedly recognizable in so many phenomena of the process of the present age....

He sought new forms and new ways which, even in the "Dark Ages," could be effective in realizing the ideal of the past, in awakening man to the dimension of transcendence

In the Dionysian world, practices similar to those of Tantrism are called Orgiasm. These are generally group ceremonies in which bloody sacrifices, ecstatic and prophetic dances and erotic rites are practiced.

Shivaite orgiasm was widely practiced in Tibetan Buddhism, but also, in earlier times, in the cults of the Middle Shivaite orgiasm was widely practiced in Tibetan Buddhism, but also, in earlier times, in the cults of the Middle East, especially among the Canaanites, Babylonians, and Hebrews. Certain passages in the Old Testament refer to characters, events, and concepts that were familiar to the Puranas; they also reflect the tradition of the bacchantes. The coexistence of contradictory “attributes” and the irrationality of some of his actions distinguish Yahweh from any “ideal of perfection” on a human scale. From this point of view, Yahweh resembles certain Hindu gods, such as Shiva and Kali-Durga, but with a significant difference: these Indian deities are above morality, and since their way of being constitutes an exemplary model, their followers do not hesitate to imitate them....

Eliot, Myths of Humanity.

- p. 83: In India there are peoples who derive their origin from the nagas, half divine beings, half human, half serpent.

- p. 88 at image: At the beginning of creation, Vishnu rests on the back of Ananta in the middle of the primordial sea. Ananta, the “naga,” symbol of cosmic energy, protects Vishnoe with his elfin heads.

- p. 170 (image) and 1/1: The demon goddess Doerga is identified by her panther.

- p. 172: The horse Kali will be Vishnoe's last manifestation.

- p. 175 at image (bronze from Cambodia). The nàga or serpent king Muka-linda, who once protected the meditating Buddha from the rain, had a triple head.

- p 177 by image (tantric painting) The bird Garoeda, an attribute both of Silva and Vishnu, stands on the demon Hirandjakasipoe; the three incarnations of Shakti - Doerga, Kali and Devi on his wings and torso symbolize life, death and rebirth. In the center sits Brahma, the creating god.

- p 216 by image: Relief from southern India showing the goddess Doerga fighting the buffalo devil Mahisasura, who was defeated after a heroic struggle.

Poupard, Dictionnaire des religions.

- p. 470 (Durgâ) Hindu female deity, wife of Shiva. Her name means “Inaccessible.” She is also called Kâli, Pârvati, etc. She is depicted in her wild form (fierce), with multiple arms and weapons in hand. Her most famous feat consists in fighting a demon disguised as a buffalo, which she strikes down with her trident, the shivalte weapon par excellence.

- p. 889 : Kali, 'the black one', is one of the terrible forms of Devi 'the Goddess' or Manhâdevî 'the great Goddess', the shakti, energy, power, wife of Shiva.

Her cult is prevalent in north-eastern India and particularly in Bengal (= Bangladesh, former East Pakistan) and the region around Calcutta (India)).

She is depicted black and completely naked, dancing on a corpse, her face grimacing.

Her many arms wave weapons, but two of her hands make a soothing gesture. She rides a lion. A symbol, like Shiva, of destructive time, cosmic night and death, but also of liberation, she is revered lyrically. Her devotees celebrate her as the Divine Mother, and mystics like Ramakrishna have seen her as a visible divine manifestation leading to the invisible Brahman, i.e., to the Absolute.

- p. 1190: The nâga or deified serpents, the secondary deities of Hinduism, are iconographically significant because they were depicted very early in the bas-reliefs of Buddhism. They are believed (supposed) to live in underground or aquatic pleasures. They are beautiful, covered with jewels. They are represented with a body that is half animal, half human.

It was a Naga king named Mucilinda who protected the Buddha from the rain after his enlightenment and allowed him to continue his meditation. In Vishnu cosmogony, the serpent Shesha, on which Vishnu sleeps between cosmic evolutionary periods, symbolizes the indefinite (that which remains "shesta" after the dissolution of the world), also known as infinity (ananta). In the iconodraphy of Shivalte, a snake is wrapped around the neck (= neck) of Shiva, sometimes around the linga. In tantric yoga, the coiled snake, the kundalini, symbolizes the latent energy (shakti) that needs to be awakened and sublimated.

Whittacker, An introduction to oriental mythology, pp 67-71

Shiva's bride is a perfect wife in the guises of Sati and Parvati, but like Shiva, she also has her hideous guises.

As Durga, she is the beautiful and fierce warrior goddess, and as the hideous personification of death and destruction, she is Kalil the black earth mother. (Images of Doerga and Kali p 68 and 69; external representation of Kali p 68) (...) To her devotees, Kali is a divine and loving mother who reveals to them the reality of mortality. She destroys not only demons but also death itself.

She especially appeals to those who find the mother-child relationship and symbol more satisfying as a revelation of divine reality:

Kali's Dance of Death:

An evil monster plagued (destroyed, ravaged) the world. He seemed invincible because every drop of blood he shed came to life and became 1000 new monsters, ready to destroy the world.

The gods called Kali and asked her to destroy the monster. The terrible goddess jumped into the fray and defeated 1000 demons with her whirling sword. As she killed them, she drank their blood and licked up the droplets before they could touch the ground and spawn more demons. Finally, only the original monster remained and she devoured him in one gulp. As she began her dance of victory, she became increasingly frenzied and uncontrollable, threatening all of creation. Fearing that the universe would be destroyed, the gods came to her husband Shiva and begged him to intervene and stop her wild dance of destruction. But she did not heed him until he threw himself down before her in despair. She began to dance on his body.

Finally she realized what she was doing, came out of her trance and stopped dancing. Thus the universe was saved from the ravages of Kali's insane dance.

Marques- Rivière, *L' Inde Secrète et sa Magie*.

- pp.35-44: The goddess Durga is the one made of gold and whose ten arms bear the attributes of dark power. She is the mystic woman, the shakti of Shiva and sometimes takes the form of Kali, the dark mother, the one who kills and destroys. They are essentially tantric goddesses who preside over rituals that date back to the mists of time.

For the description of the Durga havan - sacrificial feast which the writer himself attended: see pp.38 - 44.

Les déesses pp 110-121 etc.... !!!

Dictionnaire des sciences occultes, pp 186-187

Khali (or Devi or Dourga): She is the Hindu goddess, the wife of Shiva, the god of destruction, the god of suicide. Khali is presently at) murder. His followers are (or rather were) the Thuggs, the stranglers (chokes) whose existence was only revealed to Europe about a hundred years ago, although it took several centuries. In the eyes of his followers, criminal behavior is of divine origin. Each of the murders (committed) by these fanatics was a religious act, their inviolable code laid down the way to give death, always by strangulation. Khali the black, the man-eater, Khali, the ferocious, cruel, tearing, ruthless, unmerciful energy of Shiva, demanded victims; her devotees satisfied her (satisfied her).

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