

## 25<sup>th</sup> Episode – Kala Bhairava

Following 24<sup>th</sup> episode of “*Significance of Muruga*” towards Maha Kumbhabhisekam of Panching Gua Charas Jalalingeswarar Shivan temple, with good intention and thoughts for all devotees, the following write-up is prepared.

As discussed in the previous 24<sup>th</sup> episode, we looked at the significance of Lord Muruga. Unquote “When the **Sakthi arises and united with Shiva**, that is called liberation or **nirvana or enlightenment**. There is no more duality, only **absolute oneness, the two merging into one**. Once this is achieved, then there is nothing else but bliss and unconditional love. This is what **all the souls are longing for**”, Unquote.

In this 25<sup>th</sup> episode, we will get to know the significance of Kala Bhairava. First let’s look at the Gayatri Mantra for Lord Bhairava, as follows

**"Om Kaalakaalaaya Vidhmahey Kaalaatheethaaya Dheemahi Thanno Kaala Bhairava Prachodhayaath"**

The above is the Gayatri Mantra of Lord Bhairava, also commonly referred to as Kaala Bhairava, who is a frightful aspect of Maheshwara (Shiva).



The Trinity of Hindu Gods, that is, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, are associated with Creation, Preservation and Destruction, respectively. Bhairava, the rather fierce manifestation of Lord Shiva, is commonly associated with this aspect of annihilation.

Bhairava is a wandering form of Shiva. There are 64 Bhairavas in all. These Bhairavas come under 8 categories. Each of these categories is headed by one major Bhairava in that particular group. The leader Bhairavas are referred to as Ashtanga Bhairavas. These 8 Bhairavas, who guard and control the 8 directions of the universe, are as follows:

1. Asithaanga Bhairava
2. Ruru Bhairava
3. Chanda Bhairava
4. Krodha Bhairava
5. Unmattha Bhairava
6. Kapaala Bhairava
7. Bheeshana Bhairava
8. Samhaara Bhairava

All these Bhairavas are controlled by Maha Swarna Kala Bhairava, also known as **Kaala Bhairava**. He is the Supreme Godhead and the ruler of the rest of the Bhairavas. **Kaala Bhairava's consort is Bhairavi, the terrible aspect of Parvati, or Kali**. This frightful aspect of the Lord is predominantly

worshipped by the Aghora sect. Residents of Kashmir, who have their origin from Gorat, worship Bhairava during the festival of Shivaratri.

### **Origin of the Name Bhairava**

While the name itself may translate into "terrible" and "fearful", the actual interpretation is quite different. It **means** he is the Lord who protects his devotees from **external enemies**; as also from **internal enemies** such as greed, lust, anger and all other **negative emotions**.

There is yet another interpretation of the name "Bhairava". "**Bha**" stands for **creation**, "**Ra**" for **preservation** and "**Va**" for **destruction**. Bhairava, thus, is believed to be the Ultimate Godhead, combines all of these forces of the Universe.

Usually, one can easily find Bhairava idols in all Shiva temples. These idols are located in the **north-facing and south-facing directions**. This is the reason Lord Bhairava which will be consecrated during Maha Kumbaabishegam at Jalalingam temple will be facing south towards Panching cave. The consecration will be done with perfection whereby all devotees are welcomed to witness and join the ultimate experience, which can be a lifetime experience.

### **Bhairava - The Guardian**

Shaivites consider Bhairava to be the Protector, as he guards the 8 directions. He is also regarded as the protector of women (especially those who are timid in nature). All Shiva temples have a Bhairava idol. The keys to the temple are placed before this deity, as it is believed that he will protect the premises even when the temple is closed for the day - this is why he is also referred to as Kshetrapalaka or the Guardian of the Temple.

Kaala Bhairava is considered to be the Guru of Shani (planet Saturn). Also referred to as Bhairavar or Vairavar (in Tamil Nadu), he is often portrayed as a Grama Devata or Village Guardian, who safeguards both the village and its residents from threat that could arise from any of the eight directions. He is also venerated by the residents of Sri Lanka. In Sinhalese, he is referred to as Bahirawa. There too, he is venerated as the Guardian of Treasures.

It is believed that worshipping Bhairava gives the devotee peace, prosperity, success and progeny. The powerful God is also believed to protect his devotees from premature death, sadness, tragedy and debt.

### **Worship of Bhairava**

One can find temples or shrines dedicated to Bhairava, near most of the Jyotirlinga temples. These are the twelve most sacred shrines dedicated to the worship of Lord Shiva. These temples are scattered all over India, including the Kaal Bhairav Temple at Ujjain, the Kasi Vishwanath Temple at Varanasi and the Patal Bhairav and Vikrant Bhairav shrines at Ujjain.

In all Shiva temples, daily puja rituals begin with offering worship to Surya or the Sun God. It then ends with worshipping Bhairava. Bhairava is offered a ghee abhishek (holy bath ritual), ghee lamps, red flowers, whole coconuts, honey, boiled food, fruits and eight types of flowers and leaves.

A Bhairava idol facing west is a good sign. If it is facing south, it is moderate. A Bhairava facing east is not considered to be appropriate. Also, the best time to offer prayers to this Lord is at midnight; especially on Friday night. It is believed that, at this time, he and his consort Bhairavi will shower grace on their devotees and grant them their darshan as well.

It is believed that the **five of the eight** Bhairavas represent the **five elements** of **air, fire, water, earth and ether**. The **three others** are the **sun, moon** and the **atman (consciousness)**. Each of these eight manifestations is different in appearance and wields different weapons, have different vahanas (vehicles) and bless their devotees with eight different types of wealth, represent the Ashta Lakshmis. The mantra to invoke each of these manifestations is also different.

Bhairava is considered to be the **ultimate form for attaining liberation**. He is the One that grants the awareness of pure consciousness. This form is called the **Svarpaakarsna Bhairava**. He is depicted as a glowing red in complexion and drapes a golden dress around himself. Holding the moon in his

head, he has four hands. He is the giver of wealth and prosperity. Followers believe that praying to this form on Tuesdays, grants them immediate and effective results.

### **Bhairava Ashtami**

Bhairava Ashtami, also called Kaalaashtami, Kaala Bhairava Ashtami, Kaala Bhairava Jayanti, Bhairavashtami and Bhairava Jayanti, is a sacred day, commemorating the birth of Lord Bhairava. This event falls on the eight lunar day in the Krishna Paksha (fortnight of the waning moon) of the Hindu month of Kartik (November-December). During this period, the Lord, in the form of Dandapani, rides on his dog. He is called Dandapani, as he wields a Danda or rod, to punish sinners.

Devotees keep an all-night vigil on the night of Bhairava Ashtami, praying and singing the praises of their Lord. An elaborate midnight arati is performed with devotees blowing conches, playing drums and cymbals. **After a bath the next morning, devotees offer obeisance to their deceased kin.** Then Bhairava is worshipped along with Bhairavi and his Dog. Followers offer flowers, milk, curds and sweets to the idols. This day is considered even more sacred if it falls on a **Sunday** or a **Tuesday**.

In Varanasi, devotees undertake an eight-day pilgrimage to the eight temples of Ashta Bhairava. This journey is undertaken on the first eight days of the fortnight, ending with the Bhairava Ashtami. The deity is generally covered with a cloth (with only the face showing) the whole year round. But on this day, the cloth is removed to reveal the entire idol. His image is decorated with a garland of silver skulls. Devotees throng the temple in order to catch a glimpse of the powerful God.

### **Bhairava and Bhairavi in Tantra**

Bhairava encompasses the entire universe within himself; all the Shaktis seamlessly merging into him; becoming one with him. In Tantra, Bhairava is both an aspect of Shiva and a supremely divine mantra, capable of transporting the seeker into the highest realms of consciousness. The Vijnana-Bhairava is one of the most important tantric treatises. Similarly, the Bhairavamudra is one of the most crucial mudras (gestures) in tantra. This mudra, which is complicated and is a difficult state to achieve, is revealed only to a few sadhaks.

When Shiva completely withdraws into himself and immerses himself in his own consciousness, he rises in the awareness of being one with Kali. Thus, emerges the form of Bhairava, the masculine aspect of Kali herself, who manifests as Bhairavi. This **union of the potent male and female energies in the universe lacks any intrinsic qualities - it is pure, effulgent light.**

The thing to note here is that the **dark, evil-looking intensity depicted** in the forms of **Bhairava** and **Bhairavi do not** actually **imply evil intent**. The very nature of **Bhairava is to look inward and not outward**. Shiva, in his state of intense meditation, goes on an inward journey; eventually experiencing his existence within the womb of Kali, who manifests as Bhairavi. From this dark abyss arises the terrible form of Bhairava. Similarly, the **Bhairava-Bhairavi union aims to educate the seeker** to defy the **dark forces of evil, ignorance and violence**; journey into himself; understand that he comes from within the womb of the Universal Mother, Kali; then **finally transform** himself to emerge as powerful **pure energy**, which can help serve humanity in ways he could otherwise not even imagine possible.

Seen from this perspective, Bhairava or Mahakala is a tantric deity, which symbolizes an internalizing, holistic, healing force, which helps a sadhak towards self-fulfillment and actualization of desires. The energy of Bhairava emerges as a driving force, which overcomes every obstacle to achieve all that it seeks. It is therefore seen as "destructive" - that which destroys everything which comes in the way of its own fulfilment. For this very reason, we will consecrate Lord Bhairava in our Jalalingam temple for all devotees to experience the inward journey and ultimate blessings in form of energy.

Shiva Shambo

Om Nama Siva Ya Om

Help Ever Hurt Never

Service to Society is Service to Almighty

Master Ir. Sivabalan - Temple Trustee

16<sup>th</sup> March 2020