

## *Kala Bhairava and Kapala Moksha*

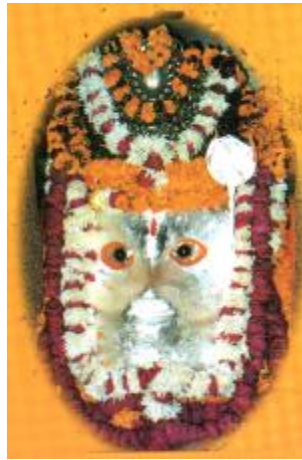
*Santhipriya*

[\(nrj1945@gmail.com\)](mailto:nrj1945@gmail.com)

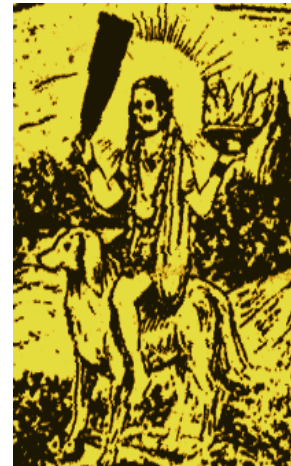
*(This is an upgraded version of my original story that appeared in the May'06 issue of Om Saravana Bhava, a Tamil monthly published from Chennai)*



Bhairavar in a Nepal Temple



Bhairava in Delhi Kalkaji temple



One form of Bhairava

### **Bhairava**

Most of the temples in North India have the idols of Lord Bhairava in one form or the other. Lord Bhairava is generally portrayed as fearsome God wearing head gear, ash smeared over entire body, carrying a trishul and a severed head or a Skull in hands sitting on a dog or the dog standing by his side. He is believed to be the

controller of Ghosts, evil souls and spirits and stay in the cemeteries. Linga Purana and Shiva Purana contains stories on him.

### Birth of Bhairava

Bhairava is also called Kala Bhairavar and his wife was Bhairavi. As per a story in Skanda purana he manifested in the midst of a dispute which arose between Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma.

Once upon a time some of the Gods and devas met in Brahma Loka and discussed many things. During the conversation a doubt was raised by some one. Who was supreme amongst the Gods ? Without hesitation Lord Brahma proudly claimed that since he was supreme amongst the Gods, such doubts need not arise in the minds of anyone. Infuriated over the self claim of Brahma , Lord Vishnu challenged the contention and an heated argument with Lord Brahma broke out.

When their heated argument remained inconclusive, they approached heads of the four Vedas seeking their opinion. The heads of Vedas pronounced that " The one who bestow favor to the devotees in the shortest of the time , the one who is accepted as supreme by the devotees, and the one whose writ runs over the entire universe remains supreme amongst the Gods. Since all such qualities were possessed only by Lord Shiva, naturally he was the supreme God amongst all"

Irked with their comments, Lord Brahma started making unethical remarks on the appearance of Lord Shiva . ' who is Shiva ?... ugly

looking God with dirty ash smeared all over the body and roaming in cemeteries like a Sanyasi , snakes instead of flowers strung on the neck, and the one who travel sitting on a buffalo !! .....Do you all feel that he is supreme than me ?? What a pity....'

When comments made by Lord Brahma reached the ears of Shiva, he was enraged. Hearing the unfair comments of Brahma which were uttered aloud, every one present there including Lord Vishnu remained dumbstruck. Within seconds a blazing flash appeared in front of them with a big bang. A blazing Bhairava came out from the flash in human form . Noticing him, Brahma asked ' Hey, who are you and why have you come here ?' Immediately the man turned into a child and started crying. Again Brahma said ' Don't weep my child. Since you have born out of my head, I name you as Rudra. You may now go and create human beings in the universe. Come on child,..... come to me and I will protect you'

No sooner did Brahma finished his advise, the child turned into a ferocious looking man. Without realizing the consequences, Lord Brahma blessed him 'hi.....man.... I now rename you as Kal Bhairav and I assign the duty to protect the humans on earth destroying evils. You may go to holy land Kashi, remain there accounting the sins of those dead , the extent of which even Yama's accountant Chitragupta can not imagine'

That was enough for Lord Bhairava to silence Lord Brahma. Shiva who had incarnated in the form of Bhairava to punish Brahma, ripped off Brahma's guilty head with the nail of his left thumb and stood before everyone exposing his true form along with Bhairava.

Lord Shiva remarked ' Oh, Brahma, one of your heads which insulted me has been destroyed by Bhairava'. Earlier Brahma was born with five faces and with the one removed by Bhairava, Brahma had to content with only four faces.

### **Bhairava in Temples**

Every one assembled there immediately realized that indeed Lord Shiva himself has manifested in the form of Bhairava and prostrated before him. Lord Shiva turned to Bhairava whom he had created and said 'By severing the fifth head of Brahma you have attained Brahmanicide (Brahmahatti Dosha), and in order to remove the sin you have to roam around the universe carrying the severed head and seeking alms till you reach Kashi in this beggarly condition. Once you enter Kashi the sin will automatically vanish'. Immediately the severed head of Lord Brahma turned into a skull and struck with one of the hands of Lord Bhairava. As Shiva finished, a fierce looking maiden appeared before them. Shiva instructed the maiden to frighten and relentlessly chase Bhairava everywhere he went until he reached the holy city of Kashi. Thereafter she may go away from there as she can not enter the holy city of Kashi.

As per the instructions of Lord Shiva, Lord Bhairava started his journey seeking alms carrying the severed head of Brahma in the form of a skull and chased by the frightening maiden. On entering Kashi the skull fell on to the ground and the maiden who chased him till then also disappeared. Brahma hatya of Bhairava sank into the nether-world, freeing Bhairava from his Brahmanicide. That is why the relatives of those dead visit Kashi to perform the final

rites and to beget the blessings of Kala Bhairava known as Kshetrapalaka, the guardian of the temple in the belief that those visiting Kashi will get Kapala Moksha i.e paving way to the dead to go to Moksha.

According to another folk tale, Angered with the insult meted out to him in the Yagya performed by his father-in-law Dakshyan and the subsequent death of his wife Parvathi by jumping into the sacred fire, Lord Shiva carried Parvathi's corpse on his shoulders and ran dancing uncontrollably all around the world for days. In order to calm down Shiva, Lord Vishnu used his Chakrayuda to cut Parvathi's body into pieces, which fell at several places subsequently becoming the Sakthi Peedas. In each of those temples Shiva stood on guard in a frightful form of Lord Bhairava. Hence Bhairava's idols form part of all the Shivite temples.

### Benefits of worshipping Lord Bhairav

When one worship Lord Bhairava with care and dedication,

- All their pending disputes will come to an end.
- Since he is the guardian of travelers, one can travel fearlessly after worshipping him before commencing the journey.
- The enemies will run away.
- Enmities will vanish.
- The robbers will not trouble you.
- Evil spirits and Ghosts and other bad omens can not come near you.

He is the manifestation of Lord Shiva and so guards Shiva Temples. Lord Kala Bhairava is also known as Kshetrapalaka, the guardian of other temple where his idols are also worshipped along with other

Gods. Kala Bhairava's mantras are chanted in the Yagyas, homas and marriage ceremonies. The tantric rites performed by the Yogis and Tantric to gain enormous power begin only after praying Vinayaga and Bhairava.

*End note: The contents of this article is based on the expressed views of the Pundits ( Pujaries ) and other devotees whom I met in the temple during my visits. Photos gathered from different sources. In case some one gets further information in the temples they visit I shall be glad and thankful if they mail me the story in [nrj1945@gmail.com](mailto:nrj1945@gmail.com) so that updates in the article can be done in future.*