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# Kamakhya

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Kamakhya** (Assamese: কামাখ্যা) is an important Hindu Tantric goddess that evolved in the Himalayan hills. She is closely identified with Kali and Maha Tripura Sundari. According to the Tantric texts (*Kalika Purana*, *Yogini Tantra*) that are the basis for her worship at the Kamakhya temple, a 16th-century temple in the Kamrup district of Assam. The earlier manifest of the goddess sanctified at the Garo hills is destroyed, although the Vatsayana priests are said to have carried away the manifest of the goddess to the Hindu kingdom in Kashmir and later sanctified in a remote hill forest in Himachal. Her name means "renowned goddess of desire," and she resides at the presently rebuilt Kamakhya Temple replacing the lost manifest now in the form of a stone yoni (female generative organ) symbolic of the goddess in 1645 C. The temple is primary amongst the 51 Shakti Peethas related to the cult of Sati, and remains one of the most important Shakta temples and Hindu pilgrimage sites in the world.

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## Origins

The origin of worship 'Shakti' at the site is associated with the legend of Sati, who was the wife of the ascetic god Shiva and daughter of the Puranic god-king Daksha. Daksha was unhappy with his daughter's choice of husband, and when he performed a grand Vedic sacrifice for all the deities, he did not invite Shiva or Sati. In a rage, Sati threw herself onto the fire, knowing that this would make the sacrifice impure. Because she was the all-powerful mother goddess, Sati left her body in that moment to be reborn as the goddess Parvati. Meanwhile, Shiva was stricken with grief and rage at the loss of his wife. He put Sati's body over his shoulder and began his *tandava* (dance of cosmic destruction) throughout the heavens, and vowed not to stop until the body was completely rotted away. The other Gods, afraid of their annihilation, implored Vishnu to pacify Shiva. Thus, wherever Shiva wandered while dancing, Vishnu followed. He sent his discus Sudarshana to destroy the corpse

## Kamakhya



<b>Sanskrit</b>	Kāmākhya
<b>Transliteration</b>	
<b>Affiliation</b>	Devi
<b>Mantra</b>	kāmākhye varade devī nīla parvata vāsinī tvaṃ devī jagataṃ mātā yonimudre namostute
<b>Weapon</b>	sword, trident, discus, shield, bow, arrows, club, lotus, bell, goad, kapala, conch
<b>Consort</b>	Shiva, but also an independent goddess
<b>Mount</b>	Lion

of Sati. Pieces of her body fell until Shiva was left without a body to carry. Seeing this, Shiva sat down to do *Mahatapasya* (great penance). Despite the similarity in name, scholars do not generally believe that this legend gave rise to the practice of sati, or widow burning.<sup>[1]</sup>

According to various myths and traditions, there are 51 pieces of Sati's body scattered across the Indian subcontinent. These places are called shakti peethas and are dedicated to various powerful goddesses. Kamarupa ("form of desire") is the region in which the *yonī* ("vulva," "womb," or "source") is said to have fallen to earth, and the Kamakhya temple was said to have been constructed on this spot.

Kamakhya as a goddess likely predates the Sanskritization of Assam. She is likely related to an important goddess of the Khasi, a tribe originally from Assam that retains matrilineal social systems (not matriarchal, however, since final authority rests with the eldest males of the maternal line).

## Identity

Kamakhya is mentioned in the *Kalika Purana* as the most important goddess of Tantric worship, and is referred to in the text as *Mahamaya*, the "great goddess of illusion", who takes on many forms depending on her mood. Devotees also call her Kameshwari ("beloved goddess of desire"), and consider her a form of Maha Tripura Sundari, also called Shodashi. She is identified with Kali in the *Kalika Purana*, *Yoginitantra* and *Kamakhya Tantra*, each of which echoes this verse:<sup>[2]</sup>

"It is certainly well known that Kamakhya is truly none other than that mother goddess Kali, who is in all things the form of wisdom."

Kamakhya is associated with the Dasa Mahavidyas, who each have temples dedicated to them at the Kamakhya temple complex in Assam. She is also closely associated with Durga.

Mantras for general worship of the Mahavidyas at the Kamakhya temple complex reveal a close identity with Kamakhya herself. Several of these goddesses are worshipped as forms of Kamakhya explicitly.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Iconography

Kamakhya is pictured as a young goddess, 16 years old, with twelve arms and six heads of varying colors, representing a powerful goddess who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. She is ornately dressed, typically wearing a red sari, opulent jewelry and red flowers such as hibiscus.

She holds in each of ten hands a lotus, trident, sword, bell, discus, bow, arrows, club or scepter, goad, and shield. Her remaining two hands hold a bowl, which is made either of gold or a skull.

She is seated upon a lotus, which emerges from the navel of Lord Shiva, who in turn lies atop a lion.

To each side of her sit Brahma and Vishnu, who are each seated upon a lotus, as well.

## See also

- Kamakhya Temple

- Ambubachi Mela
- Kamakshi

## References

- ↑ J.S. Hawley, *Sati, the Blessing and the Curse*. Oxford University Press (New York: 1994). p. 50-1.
- ↑ B. Shastri. *Kamakhya Tantra*. Bharatiy Vidya Prakash (Delhi, Varanasi: 1990). p. 20.  
yā devi kālīkā mātā sarva vidyāsvarūpinī |  
kāmākhyā saiva vikhyātā satyam devi nacānyathā ||
- ↑ *Viswa Shanti Devi Yajna*. Viswa Shanti Devi Yajna Committee. Mandala Communications (Guwahati: 2004). pp. 22-8.

## Further reading

- *Hindu Goddesses: Vision of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Traditions* (ISBN 81-208-0379-5) by David Kinsley
- *Renowned Goddess of Desire: Women, Sex, and Speech in Tantra* (ISBN 978-0195327830) by Loriliai Biernacki
- *The Power of Tantra: Religion, Sexuality and the Politics of South Asian Studies* (ISBN 978-1845118747) by Hugh Urban
- *The Kalikapurana: Sanskrit Text, Introduction & Translation in English* (ISBN 8170812305) by Biswanarayan Shastri

## External links

- About Temple Kamakhya (<http://www.kamakhyadevi.com/about-temple-kamakhya/>)
- Kamakhya Mantra and Sadhana Vidhi (<http://www.docstoc.com/docs/73481157/Kamakhya-Mantra-and-Sadhana-Vidhi>)
- Kamakhya: The Source and Fulfillment of Desire (<http://kamakhyamandir.org/featured/kamakhya/>)

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