

# Shri Kali Devi Temple, Patiala, India: History, Deity, Worship & Yagya System

Shraddha Gupta<sup>1</sup> and Ipsit Pratap Singh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Graduate Student, Department of Indian History and Culture, Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya, Haridwar, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Indian History and Culture, Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya, Haridwar, India

**Abstract.** The Shri Kali Devi Temple in Patiala, Punjab, is a vibrant center of fierce Śākta–Tantric worship in North India, primarily dedicated to Maa Kali in her intense cremation-ground (\*samsān rūpa\*) form. The principal six-foot black stone idol, installed in 1936 under Maharaja Bhupinder Singh’s patronage, depicts Kali in classical Bengali Śākta style: jet-black complexion, protruding tongue, muṇḍamālā, four arms bearing weapons and mudrās, standing upon Śiva—symbolizing the inseparability of dynamic Śakti and pure consciousness. Daily worship follows a structured Bengali-influenced Āgamic pattern, including pre-dawn maṅgala āratī, abhiṣeka with milk, curd, honey and herbs, ṣoḍaśopacāra pūjā, sandhyā āratī, and bhoga offerings. Complementary deities (Śivliṅga, Bhairava, Gaṇeśa, Raj Rajeshwari, Navagrahas) reflect Śaiva–Śākta syncretism. Mantras draw from Kālī Tantra, Tantrasāra, Devi Māhātmyam, and Śiva Purāna, emphasizing protection, liberation, and ego-dissolution. A hereditary priesthood, led by Mukhya Purohit Ravi Mishra, upholds guru–śiṣya transmission and personal sādhanā. The elaborate yagya system features daily nitya homa to sustain the śakti kṣetra, alongside major mahāyagyas during Navarātri and Amāvāsyā (Navakuṇḍa/Navachanḍī, Kāla Sarpa Doṣa Nivāraṇa, Śatru Vināśa, symbolic coconut bali. Devotees participate through sponsorship and saṅkalpa, seeking protection from black magic, enemies, fear, and planetary afflictions. Ethnographic observations (2023–2024) highlight the temple’s role as a living tīrtha sustaining devotional, cultural, and social continuity in contemporary Punjab. **Keywords.** Shri Kali Devi Temple Patiala, Maa Kali worship, Yagya system, Śākta–Tantric rituals, Bengali-influenced pūjā

## \*CORRESPONDENCE

Assistant Professor, Department of Indian History and Culture, Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya, Haridwar, India  
Email: ipsit.singh@dsvv.ac.in

## PUBLISHED BY

Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya  
Gayatrikunj-Shantikunj, Haridwar, India

## OPEN ACCESS

Copyright (c) 2026 Gupta & Singh.

Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License



## Introduction

Temples and Yagyashala were not only the place to do worship in India but they also served as research labs for the Rishi (saints). They practiced the effect of Mantra, and Yantra and utilization of various herbs inside the Yagyashala and temples. Therefore, the materials used for the construction of Yagyashala or the temple were very identified and used precisely and so thus the land on which the constructions take place. Indian scriptures suggest various parameters for the land and soil testing before building a Yagyashala, Mandap of Yagyashala or any rituals and, temples or any residential buildings. For the construction of Yagya Mandap or Yagyashala, various subject experts were involved in study. The Shri Kali Devi Temple in Patiala, Punjab, stands as a prominent center of fierce Shakti worship in North India. It is dedicated to Maa Kali in her powerful “samsān rūpa” (cremation-ground form) [1]. The temple owes its origin to the royal patronage of the Patiala princely state. It represents a significant transmission of Bengali-influenced Śākta–Tantric traditions into the Punjab region [2]. Its lineage connects to earlier shrines for the royal kuldevi Raj Rajeshwari, established under Raja Karam Singh [3–5]. However, the present grand temple was commissioned in 1936 by Maharaja Bhupinder Singh (reigned 1900–1938). He was deeply inspired by Bengali Tantric traditions [4]. Motivated by a divine vision and dream in which Goddess Kali instructed him to install her fierce form in the capital, the Maharaja procured a six-foot black stone idol and the eternal Paawan Jyot (sacred flame) from Calcutta between 1920 and 1924 [5]. This flame continues to burn uninterrupted to this day, symbolizing perpetual divine energy and uninterrupted Shakti presence [5]. The site opposite Baradari Garden and near Qila Mubarak was deliberately chosen to project divine guardianship over the city and the princely state. This aligns with Śākta beliefs that Kali’s gaze protects against evil forces and natural calamities such as floods [6]. Oral traditions and priestly accounts describe the initial outward-facing installation of the idol. It was later enclosed by walls due to urban growth and concerns regarding the intensity of her śakti. These accounts also recount the Maharaja’s barefoot journey to bring the idol and sacred flame, as well as the inaugural tantric sacrifice performed to ritually “seal” the temple’s protective power [7]. Today, Shri Kali Devi Temple is recognized as a significant heritage and pilgrimage site. It is acknowledged by institutional bodies such as the Punjab Tourism Department and temple authorities [8]. It attracts devotees especially on Saturdays,

Amāvāsyā nights, and during Navarātri. It draws pilgrims from Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and tantric practitioners from Varanasi, Kolkata, and beyond [7]. The present manuscript focuses primarily on the living traditions of the temple — its iconography, theology, daily and special worship of Maa Kali and complementary deities, the hereditary priesthood structure, the elaborate yagya system (including both nitya homa and major mahāyagyas), and the ways in which this sacred space continues to sustain devotional life, cultural continuity, and social welfare in contemporary times [9].

## History

### Early Foundations and Royal Kuldevi Tradition

The spiritual foundations of the Shri Kali Devi Temple site predate the present Kali installation. They are rooted in the royal kuldevi tradition of the Patiala princely state. Around 1845, Maharaja Narinder Singh established a shrine dedicated to Raj Rajeshwari, the family deity of the Patiala royals. He brought a sacred flame from Jawalaji (Himachal Pradesh) [5]. This shrine functioned as an early focal point of Shakti worship for the royal household and the surrounding community [5]. Following the commissioning of the Kali temple in 1936, the Raj Rajeshwari shrine was not displaced but instead absorbed into the expanded temple complex. This preserved continuity between earlier royal devotional practices and the later Śākta–Tantric emphasis introduced under Maharaja Bhupinder Singh [4]. The coexistence of these two Shakti forms within the same precinct reflects a layered sacred history rather than a rupture. It maintains ancestral lineage worship alongside intensified Kali sādhanā [10].

### Temple Architecture and Construction Features

The present Shri Kali Devi Temple was formally constructed in 1936 under the patronage of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh [4]. Architecturally, the temple represents a fusion of Rajput–Mughal structural elements with Bengali Śākta design sensibilities. It is arranged within a traditional Sanātana Śaili layout across a six-mohalla complex [2].

Figure 1: Architectural setting and spatial arrangement of the Surya shrine within the Shri Kali Devi Temple complex, highlighting structural continuity and heritage construction features. Key structural components of the temple include:



Figure 1: Architectural setting and spatial arrangement of the Surya shrine within the Shri Kali Devi Temple complex.

- A garbhagriha housing the principal six-foot black stone idol of Maa Kali
- A pillared maṇḍapa serving as the main congregational worship hall
- The adjacent pre-1936 Raj Rajeshwari shrine
- A rear sarovar (ritual pond), historically used for purification and currently undergoing restoration (as of 2025)
- A courtyard dhwaja stambha used during festivals and major observances
- Outer compound walls added in later decades
- Multiple historic entrances, some of which are presently being revived.

Construction materials reflect regional collaboration and ritual symbolism: white marble was used for flooring and pillars, black granite (sourced from Bengal) for the Kali idol, brick and lime plaster for walls, kasauti stone for the Śivlinga, and iron and brass fittings for ritual and architectural elements [2]. Oral accounts and temple records indicate that local Punjabi masons worked alongside Bengali sculptors during the idol installation and finishing stages. This

reinforced the cultural transmission embedded in the structure itself [7].

### Sacred Geography and Symbolic Placement

The temple's location on Mall Road, facing Baradari Garden and situated near Qila Mubarak and Rajendra Tank, holds deliberate symbolic significance [8]. This placement visually and ritually links royal authority, civic life, and divine guardianship [4]. In Śākta cosmology, the positioning of a fierce goddess temple near centers of power is understood as a protective measure. The deity's presence is believed to shield the city from calamities and hostile forces [6]. The rear sarovar functions as a ritual

substitute for natural rivers or mountainous sacred landscapes commonly referenced in tantric geography. It allows for purification rites within an urban setting [8]. The presence of dual sacred flames — the Paawan Jyot originating from Kolkata and the earlier Jawalaji flame preserved in the Raj Rajeshwari shrine — is regarded by priests as significantly intensifying the site's śakti kṣetra (field of sacred energy) [5]. Together, these elements establish the temple not merely as a built structure, but as a consciously designed sacred landscape. It integrates royal devotion, tantric cosmology, and living ritual practice [9, 10]. Figure 2: Historical dry water body (Sukha Neher) representing the ritual and symbolic water geography associated with the temple site.



Figure 2: Historical dry water body (Sukha Neher) associated with the temple site.

### 2.1 Name, Form, and Symbolic Meaning of the Principal Deity [1].

The mūla-vigraha (principal image) of the temple is Maa Kali, locally addressed as Shri Kali Devi or Mahā Kali. She is worshipped here in her fierce warrior manifestation, one of the most intense expressions of Ādi Śakti — the primordial feminine power

#### 2.1.1 Iconographic Description

The six-foot black stone idol, sourced from Bengal and installed in 1936, depicts Kali in the classical Bengali Śākta style (Figure 3):



Figure 3: Principal deity of the Shri Kali Devi Temple: Maa Kali statue as the protector of Patiala, Punjab.

- Jet-black complexion, symbolizing the formless and infinite reality beyond attributes
- Protruding tongue, representing the shocking truth of ego-dissolution and transcendence of social convention
- Garland of skulls (*munḍamālā*), signifying the

cycle of life and death as well as the Sanskrit alphabet as divine sound vibration

- Four arms typically holding a sword (khaḍga), severed head, trident, and displaying mudrās (notably Vara and Abhaya, blessing devotees while destroying sin)
- Standing or dancing upon the supine body of Lord Śiva (Mahākāla), illustrating the inseparability of dynamic energy (Śakti) and pure consciousness (Śiva).

Priests describe this manifestation as Kali's samśān rūpa (cremation-ground form), emphasizing her role as the destroyer of ignorance, ego, and evil forces, while simultaneously embodying protection, liberation, and fearless motherhood [11].

### 2.1.2 Theological and Protective Role

Within the temple's living tradition, Kali is understood as:

- The destroyer of evil, ignorance, and demonic forces
- The liberator (mokṣadāyini) from the cycle of birth and death
- The supreme protector against black magic, injustice, negative planetary influences, enemies (śatru), and existential fear
- The raw and uncompromising expression of feminine divine power (Śakti) that both terrifies and liberates.

Scriptural foundations referenced by priests and ritual manuals include:

- Devi Māhātmyam (Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa),
- Kālikā Purāṇa
- Kālī Tantra, Mahākāla Saṃhitā, and Śākta Āgamas

## 2.2 Complementary Deities and Śaiva–Śākta Syncretism

The temple complex is consciously structured around the inseparability of Śakti and Śiva. Priests frequently emphasize: “There is no pūjā of Śakti without Śiva” [3]. Figure 4: Placement and ritual presence of Śiva within the temple premises, reflecting the lived Śaiva–Śākta syncretism.

### 2.2.1 Principal Complementary Deity: Śiva (Śivliṅga)

A black kasauti-stone Śivliṅga, consistent with Bengali Śākta temple tradition, is installed within the complex, typically positioned to the side or rear of the main sanctum. Daily abhiṣeka is performed using pañcāmṛta, bilva leaves, and Gaṅgā jal, accompanied by the recitation of Om Namaḥ Śivāya and the Mahāmṛtyuñjaya Mantra [12]. The theological rationale articulated by the priests is succinct: “Without Śakti, Śiva is Śava (a corpse); without Śiva, Śakti becomes uncontained force.” The Śivliṅga thus represents formless, eternal consciousness (nirguṇa brahman), complementing Kali's dynamic and transformative energy [12].

### 2.2.2 Other Deities in the Temple Premises

In addition to Kali and Śiva, the temple complex includes:

- Bhairava, the fierce guardian form of Śiva and protector of Śākta shrines
- Gaṇeśa, remover of obstacles and son of Śiva–Śakti
- Raj Rajeshwari, the kuldevī of the Patiala royal family (pre-1936 shrine)
- Sūrya and Navagrahas, acknowledged as subordinate to Kali as governor of time and karma

This arrangement exemplifies lived Śaiva–Śākta syncretism, expressed through shared tantric rituals, mantras, and the philosophical unity of consciousness (Śiva) and energy (Śakti) [12].

## 2.3 Philosophical, Theological, and Spiritual Dimensions

### 2.3.1 Philosophical Interpretation

Philosophically, Kali is understood to symbolize:

- Ultimate reality (nirguṇa brahman) through her black, attribute-less form
- Time (kāla) and cosmic transformation
- The destruction of ahaṃkāra (ego) and māyā (illusion)
- The inseparable relationship between Puruṣa (still Śiva) and Prakṛti (active Śakti)

Her terrifying iconography functions as a deliberate rupture of conventional perception, revealing truth beyond duality [11].

### 2.3.2 Devotional and Experiential Understanding

For devotees, Kali is primarily experienced as the compassionate Divine Mother who:

- Protects from fear, evil eye, nightmares, and black magic
- Liberates from attachment and repeated suffer-

ing

- Grants courage, inner strength, and wish-fulfillment (mannat)

Midnight worship is considered especially potent, reflecting Kali's association with dissolution, liminality, and transcendence [7].



Figure 4: Śaiva presence within the Śākta temple complex: Shiv Mandir and Shivling.

## 2.4 Daily Schedule of Worship (Nitya Pūjā Vidhi)

- Protects from fear, evil eye, nightmares, and black magic
- Liberates from attachment and repeated suffering
- Grants courage, inner strength, and wish-fulfillment (mannat)

Daily worship follows a structured Bengali-influenced Śākta-Āgamic pattern [2].

### 2.4.1 Kali Mūla-vigraha Schedule

- 4:30–5:00 am – Maṅgala Āratī (awakening with conch, bells, bhajans)
- 5:00–6:30 am – Abhiṣeka / Snāna (milk, curd, honey, ghee, herbs)
- 6:30–7:30 am – Ṣoḍaśopacāra Pūjā (sixteen ritual offerings)

- 12:00 noon – Madhyāhna Bhoga

- 4:00–6:00 pm – Śṛṅgāra / Alaṅkāra

- 7:00–8:00 pm – Sandhyā Āratī

- 8:30 pm onward – Śayana (symbolic rest; temple closes around 9:00 pm)

These rites are conducted by the head priest (mukhya pūjārī), assisted by junior priests and sevaks. Tantric specialists join during complex rituals [9].

### 2.4.2 Śivliṅga Daily Worship

- 5:00–6:00 am – Abhiṣeka

- 6:30–7:30 am – Alaṅkāra and Dīpa Āratī

- 12:00 noon – Bhoga

- 7:00–8:00 pm – Sandhyā Āratī

- Before closing – mantra japa and triśūla abhiṣeka

Devotees may personally offer water, bilva leaves, and chant Om Namaḥ Śivāya outside main ritual times [9].

## 2.5 Mantras and Scriptural Sources in Daily Worship

Daily recitation includes:

- Bīja Mantra: Om Krīm Kālikāyai Namaḥ — Kali Tantra, Tantrasāra, Devi Upaniṣad
- Pañcākṣara: Om Namaḥ Śivāya — Yajurveda, Śiva Purāṇa
- Mahāmṛtyuñjaya Mantra — Ṛgveda 7.59.12, Śiva Purāṇa
- Bhairava Mantra: Om Bhairavāya Namaḥ — Rudra Yāmala Tantra
- Gaṇeśa Mantra: Om Gaṇ Gaṇapataye Namaḥ — Gaṇeśa Atharvaśīrṣa
- Durga Saptashati excerpts (Argalā Stotra, Kavaca, Rātri Sūkta) — Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa

Mantras are understood iconographically: sword → Krīm, skull garland → Sahasranāma vibration, Kali standing on Śiva → Śiva-Śakti unity [11].

## 3.1 Composition and Distribution of Purohits

The temple maintains a small but highly specialized team of purohits. According to the head priest Ravi Mishra (in service since 2003), core ritual functions are carried out by priests drawn from long-established hereditary lineages historically associated with the temple [3]. The temple operates with a compact core group; while no official figure is publicly stated, operational accounts indicate that approximately four to seven priests are actively serving at any given time, depending on festival and ritual demands [9].

- Purohits for the principal deity (Maa Kali): The majority of daily and special pūjās directed to the mūla-vigraha are performed by one to two senior purohits, with the Mukhya Purohit leading the principal rites, including abhiṣeka, ṣoḍaśopacāra pūjā, sandhyā āratī, and major tantric anuṣṭhāna [9].

- Purohits for auxiliary worship: Additional priests or trained assistants attend to secondary shrines (Śivliṅga, Bhairava, Gaṇeśa, Raj Rameshwari) and support roles during large-scale observances such as Navarātri homas and community Yagyas

During major festivals (Navarātri, Amāvāsyā, Kālī Pūjā), the core team is supplemented by assistant priests and sevaks. For especially esoteric or large-scale rites, tantric specialists from outside centers such as Varanasi or Bengal may be invited [9].

## 3.2 Hierarchical Structure of the Priesthood

The priesthood follows a clear hierarchical structure rooted in ritual authority, lineage, and historical royal patronage [10].

- Head Priest (Mukhya Purohit / Main Pūjārī) The senior-most officiant, responsible for the principal daily worship of Maa Kali, supervision of all ritual protocols, and leadership of major tantric anuṣṭhāna (including Mahāmṛtyuñjaya, Kāla Sarpa Doṣa Nivāraṇa, and Śatru Vināśa rites). This position is currently held by Ravi Mishra.
- Assistant Priests (Sahāyaka Purohits) Perform supporting ritual roles such as preparation of bhoga, deity śrīṅgāra, assistance in abhiṣeka, management of devotee flow during peak hours, and regular worship at secondary shrines, particularly the daily Śivliṅga abhiṣeka.
- Temple Sevaks and Volunteers Non-priestly assistants responsible for logistical and service functions, including maintenance of cleanliness, arrangement of flowers and lamps, distribution of prasāda, crowd regulation, and festival preparations such as maṇḍapa decoration and kanyā pūjan arrangements

During large mahāyagyas (for example, Navakuṇḍa or Navachaṇḍī rituals), additional ṛtvij may be engaged, sometimes numbering between nine and twenty-one depending on scale [9].

## 3.3 Selection and Appointment of Purohits

The system of appointment is predominantly hereditary, reinforced by rigorous training and initiation. The current head priest, Ravi Mishra, belongs to a multi-generational priestly family associated with the temple since its formative decades. His

grandfather served from 1923, his father from 1948, and Ravi Mishra himself has served since 2003, reflecting the long-standing transmission of ritual authority within select Brahmin families historically patronized by the Patiala royal house [3]. Selection is not purely genealogical. Candidates undergo extensive training in: Śākta and Śaiva Āgamas, Tantric ritual systems, Vedic karmakāṇḍa, Mantra-śāstra.

Training occurs primarily through apprenticeship under senior purohits and includes both textual study and practical instruction. Core texts studied include the Kālī Tantra, Tantrasāra, Śiva Purāṇa, Agni Purāṇa, and Durga Saptashati, alongside hands-on learning of homa paddhati, yantra installation, and tantric ritual discipline [2]. Initiation (dīkṣā) into specific mantras and ritual lineages is mandatory before a priest is permitted to independently perform principal worship or advanced anuṣṭhāna. Knowledge transmission remains predominantly oral, experiential, and lineage-based rather than purely textual [3].

### 3.4 Personal Sādhanā Paddhati of the Purohits

While detailed disclosure of individual sādhanā is traditionally restricted within tantric lineages, certain core elements are consistently evident through priestly testimony and observation [3]. Daily personal practice typically includes:

- Japa of principal mantras (especially Om Kṛīm Kālikāyai Namaḥ, Om Namaḥ Śivāya, and the Mahāmṛtyuñjaya Mantra)
- Meditation on the deity prior to temple service
- Strict maintenance of ritual purity before entering the sanctum

Purohits follow a disciplined daily routine involving early rising during brahma-muhūrta, purification baths, preparatory mantra recitation, and mental saṅkalpa before performing public rites. Tantric specialists within the lineage may also maintain additional private sādhanās involving midnight japa, yantra worship, and controlled ritual substances, conducted strictly in accordance with Āgamic injunctions [2].

### 3.5 Texts and Manuals Used for Ritual and Sādhanā

The priests rely on a combination of classical scriptures and locally preserved ritual manuals, including:

- Core scriptural sources: Kālī Tantra, Tantrasāra, Mahākāla Saṃhitā, Durga Saptashati / Devi Māhātmyam, Śiva Purāṇa, Agni Purāṇa, Ṛgveda, Yajurveda [2]
- Practical and oral sources: Handwritten or family-transmitted Śākta paddhati texts Locally preserved ritual notebooks documenting temple-specific adaptations of Bengali Śākta rites

These materials are continuously studied and transmitted orally, ensuring fidelity to both pan-Indian scriptural traditions and the distinctive ritual character of the Patiala shrine [10].

### 3.6 Anuṣṭhāna and Special Yagya Performed by Purohits

Beyond daily service, purohits regularly undertake both personal and temple-sponsored anuṣṭhāna, particularly during intensified ritual periods: Daily Nitya Homa, and Extended Mahāmṛtyuñjaya Anuṣṭhāna (often exceeding 1,100 recitations) including other Yagyas mentioned elsewhere in the manuscript.

These rites are performed only by properly initiated priests and involve strict observance of purity codes, precise kuṇḍa construction, and extended mantra recitation under controlled conditions [3].

The Yagya tradition at Shri Kali Devi Temple, Patiala encompasses the physical infrastructure of the Yagyashala and kuṇḍa, the daily nitya homa, major festival-based and request-driven mahāyagyas, materials and procedural (paddhati) details, scriptural foundations, and patterns of devotee participation. This system is documented through direct priest interviews, long-term observation of ritual practice, and reference to classical tantric and Vedic texts preserved within the temple tradition [9].

### 4.1 Yagyashala and Yagyakunda

The temple maintains a dedicated space for fire offerings that accommodates both permanent and temporary ritual arrangements. A fixed havan sthala exists within the temple complex, functioning as an open or semi-covered Yagya maṇḍapa used for daily homa and smaller anuṣṭhāna. During major festivals, particularly Navarātri, additional temporary maṇḍapas are erected in the courtyard and adjacent areas to support multiple kuṇḍas [9].

Photographic documentation from Navarātri observances and oral accounts from the Mukhya Purohit confirm the continued use of both permanent and

seasonal kuṇḍa systems. Priests emphasize that precise altar geometry is essential for correctly channeling offerings through Agni as divine messenger [3]. Scriptural authorities cited by the priests for kuṇḍa construction and geometry include the Śulba Sūtras, Tantrarāj Tantra, Kālī Tantra, Rudra Yāmala, and Agni Purāṇa [2].

## 4.2 Nitya (Daily) Homa

A regular fire offering is performed every day, typically during brahma-muhūrta (pre-dawn) or immediately before the morning maṅgala āratī. The nitya homa serves several interconnected functions: maintaining the temple's living śakti kṣetra, purifying subtle negativities (doṣa, dr̥ṣṭi) affecting the premises and devotees, fulfilling obligatory nitya karma as prescribed in Āgamic texts, and carrying devotees' saṅkalpa to the deity through Agni [2]. The ritual follows a blended Śākta-Āgamic and Vedic-Gṛhya structure:

1. Agni Sthāpana – ignition using camphor and mango wood, invocation through Agni Sūkta or Oṃ Agnaye Svāhā
2. Devī Āvāhanam – invocation of Maa Kali using the Krīm̄ bīja mantra and selected verses from the Durga Sūktam
3. Āhutiḥ – offerings of ghee, black and white sesame, honey, bilva leaves, hibiscus petals, and dry rice, each accompanied by Oṃ Krīm̄ Kālikāyai Svāhā or related mantras
4. Śānti Pāṭha and Saṅkalpa – prayers for temple protection and devotee welfare
5. Agni Visarjana – controlled conclusion with water and closing mantras

The daily homa (Figure 5) generally lasts twenty to thirty minutes and is performed by one to two purohīts, with additional priests present on high-attendance days [3]. Primary textual sources for the nitya homa include the Kālī Tantra, Agni Rahasya, Durga Saptashatī, Agni Purāṇa, and locally preserved Śākta paddhati manuals transmitted through priestly lineages [2].

## 4.3 Special Yagya on Calendrical and Requested Occasions

Beyond daily offerings, the temple conducts a range of intensified Yagya, either annually, festival-based, or commissioned by devotees [9].

### *Kālī MahāYagya*

Occasion: Chaitra and Śāradīya Navarātri, Kālī Jayantī

Purpose: Removal of obstacles, śatru vināśa, collective and national protection Type and Scale: Navakuṇḍa or larger; nine to twenty-one ṛtvij

Offerings: Red hibiscus, dried red chilies, black and white sesame, iron filings, ghee

Duration: Multi-day, often spanning the full Navarātri cycle

Leadership: Led by the Mukhya Purohit, assisted by local and invited priests from Varanasi and Bengal.

### *Amāvāsyā Tāntrika Homa*

Occasion: Every new-moon night, with heightened intensity during Bhādra, Āśvina, and Kārtika Amāvāsyā

Purpose: Removal of black magic, ancestral afflictions, and mental unrest

Ritual Features: Conducted post-10 pm to midnight; use of black sesame, neem, camphor, mustard, ash gourd; recitation of Kālī Kavaca and tantric bīja mantras

Participants: Three to five trained tāntrika purohīts, occasionally including external specialists.

Purpose: Prosperity, health, and social harmony Ritual Structure: Complete 700-śloka recitation of the Durga Saptashatī with nine kuṇḍas symbolizing the Navadurgā

Participants: Minimum of nine purohīts, with a principal ācārya maintaining continuous recitation.

### *Śatru Nāśana Tāntrika Yagya*

Occasion: Performed on devotee request (legal disputes, persistent opposition, political or social instability)

Ritual Elements: Kālī bīja japa, Śatru Nivāraṇa Kavaca, red flowers, symbolic balī using pumpkin or ash gourd

Participants: Five to seven initiated tāntrika purohīts, often conducted privately at night.

### *Rāṣṭra Kalyāṇa MahāYagya*

Occasion: National calamities, elections, periods of social unrest (initiated by the temple trust) Participants: Fifteen to twenty purohīts and support staff, with broad community involvement.



Figure 5: Yagya (Hawan) kund of the temple.

#### 4.4 Materials Commonly Employed in Yagya

Materials used in the temple's yagya system are selected for both scriptural sanction and symbolic po-

- Mango wood, cow-dung cakes

- Primary āhuti items: Ghee, black and white sesame, honey, bilva leaves, hibiscus petals, red flowers, dried red chilies, mustard seeds, camphor, black lentils, iron filings
- Symbolic bali: Coconut (current practice)
- Additional items: Sandalwood, lotus seeds, sugarcane, ash gourd, neem.

#### 4.5 Devotee Participation in Yagya

Lay devotees actively participate in both daily and special homas [9].

- Sponsorship and Saṅkalpa: Individuals or families sponsor Yagyas through the temple office, providing names, gotra, and intended purpose.
- Role of the Yajamāna: The sponsoring devotee sits near the kuṇḍa, offers basic items such as ghee, akṣata, flower petals, or coconut, repeats simplified svāhā invocations, and receives rakṣā sūtra, vibhūti, and prasāda.
- Commonly requested personal Yagyas: Kālī Śānti Homa, Śatru Nāśana Homa, Navagraha Śānti, Durga Saptashati Havan, Kanyā Pūjan combined with homa, and business or financial protection Yagyas.

Smaller homas are typically conducted by one or two purohitas, while larger ceremonies may involve five to twenty-one ṛtvij. A ritual record (pothī) is maintained with names and saṅkalpas, continuing a documentation practice dating back to the royal period [3].

### Discussion and Conclusion

The Shri Kali Devi Temple of Patiala emerges, through the foregoing examination, not merely as a historical monument or ritual center but as a living tīrtha—a dynamic sacred ecosystem where intense Śākta–Tantric devotion, hereditary priestly transmission, community participation, and social responsibility intersect. Its significance lies as much in its continuity of practice as in its theological depth and cultural embeddedness [9].

#### Devotee Connection and Lived Experience

The temple attracts a wide and diverse spectrum of devotees, including residents of Patiala city and surrounding rural areas, pilgrims from across Punjab, Haryana, the Chandigarh Tricity, and Himachal Pradesh, and tantric sādhakas from regions

such as Varanasi, Kolkata, Jammu, and Bengal. Saturdays witness the largest routine gatherings, while Amāvāsyā nights and Navarātri festivals draw exceptionally large congregations [7]. Devotional motivations are primarily centered on Maa Kali’s perceived protective and transformative powers. Devotees seek relief from black magic, evil eye, enemies, nightmares, planetary afflictions, and persistent fear; healing from physical and psychological suffering; and fulfillment of vows (mannat) related to employment, marriage, childbirth, legal disputes, and ancestral continuity. For many families in and around Patiala, the goddess functions as kuldevī, anchoring intergenerational ritual obligation [11]. Maa Kali is affectionately addressed as Rakṣā Karnewālī Mā (the protective mother) and Śatru Nāśinī Devī (destroyer of enemies), reflecting a devotional synthesis in which fierce guardianship coexists with intimate maternal compassion. Personal testimonies gathered from devotees consistently emphasize perceived tangible outcomes: protection of livelihoods, resolution of family distress, academic success, and emotional stability. Elderly pilgrims frequently note that major life-cycle saṁskāras—from birth rites to memorial observances—are conducted here due to long-standing ancestral associations with the temple [9]. Figure 6: Sacred trees and associated vow-making practices, illustrating the integration of ecological reverence and popular devotional expressions within the temple landscape.

#### Ritual and Cultural Continuity

Ritual life at the temple extends beyond individual devotion into sustained cultural transmission. Families regularly sponsor personal homas, vratas, and anuṣṭhāna—including Kālī Śānti Homa, Śatru Nāśana Homa, Navagraha Śānti, and Durga Saptashati Havan—marking life events such as marriage, childbirth, health crises, and protective rites [9]. Women play a visibly active role in temple life, leading kanyā pūjan, bhajan maṇḍalis during Navarātri, monthly Aṣṭamī Kālī Pāṭha, Karvā Chauth observances, and langar preparation. Children participate in kanyā pūjan, storytelling and recitation activities, and prasāda distribution, ensuring early immersion in ritual culture [13]. Traditional arts and performative expressions continue to thrive within the temple space: Śākta bhajans and kirtans—often aligned with the musical sensibilities of the Patiala Gharana—accompanied by ḍhol-damau and śaṅkha during ārati; folk giddā and jāgran during Navarātri; all-night devotional gatherings; recitation and exposition (kathā-vācana) of the Durga Saptashati; and oral retellings of regional royal and temple legends

[10]. The distribution of prasāda (such as khicḍī and halvā), energized ritual items (rakṣā sūtra, vibhūti, rudrākṣa, yantras), pūjā kits, and printed mantras (including Kālī Kavaca and Mahāmṛtyuñjaya) ex-

tends devotional practice into domestic spaces, reinforcing continuity between temple and household worship [9].



Figure 6: Vernacular devotional practices and sacred trees in the temple precinct.

### Social Service and Community Welfare

Beyond ritual functions, Shri Kalī Devi Temple actively participates in social service and community welfare. Daily and festival-based annadāna and langar, particularly large-scale during Amāvāsyā and Navarātri, serve devotees across caste and social boundaries, with occasional participation from non-Hindu communities [8]. Charitable initiatives include winter distribution of blankets and clothing, financial assistance to underprivileged families, medical camps (eye care, blood donation, Ayurvedic consultation), educational support through scholarships and book distribution, and assistance for economically constrained marriages [8]. During periods of crisis, the temple has functioned as a site of relief and resilience, providing COVID-19 aid packets, shelter and support during floods (notably in 2019 and

2023), and mobilizing collective ritual and material responses to communal distress [8]. Environmental and sustainability-conscious practices are increasingly visible, including biodegradable offerings, waste composting, and preservation of sacred trees such as Peepal and Neem. An affiliated gauśālā, supported by donations, shelters injured or abandoned cows, utilizes dung for compost and ritual fuel, and symbolically integrates ecological care with religious duty [8]. Informal pāṭhaśālās and gurukul-style instruction sustain the transmission of Sanskrit, mantra recitation, yagya procedures, and tantric discipline through direct guru-śiṣya engagement, reinforcing the temple's role as both ritual center and pedagogical space [10].

## Conclusion

The traditional assessment of land, as prescribed in Vedic texts and manuals such as *Smartakunda Samikṣā*, *Śāradātilaka*, and *Mandapakuṇḍa Saṅgraha*, offers a comprehensive framework for evaluating the suitability of a site for the construction of a Yagya Mandap. These criteria—spanning environmental, geophysical, energetic, and ritual dimensions—are intended not only to enhance the efficacy of the Yagya but also to ensure maximum benefit for the surrounding community, particularly by selecting land closer to residential areas or water bodies, thereby enabling broader participation and collective upliftment. In its totality, Shri Kali Devi Temple, Patiala represents a rare continuity of fierce yet compassionate Śākta practice in North India—where Tantric intensity, Vedic structure, royal patronage, hereditary priesthood, and popular devotion converge within a living sacred landscape. The temple's enduring vitality lies not only in its antiquity or architecture, but in its capacity to adapt without rupture: preserving centuries-old ritual systems while responding to contemporary social, spiritual, and ecological needs. As such, it stands as a powerful example of how living religious traditions continue to shape, protect, and sustain communities in the present age [11].

**Compliance:** Not required.

**Conflict of Interest:** None.

## References

- [1] Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa. *Devī Māhātmya* (Durga Saptashati). Chapters 81–93. Translated by Swami Jagadis-

warananda. Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1953.

- [2] Krishnananda Agamavagisha. *Tantrasāra*. (17th century CE). Translated by Arthur Avalon. Madras: Ganesh Co., 1918; *Kālī Tantra* (ca. 15th century CE); *Śākta Āgamas* (various tantric texts, ca. 5th-15th century CE).
- [3] Mishra, Ravi (Head Priest). Personal interview. Shri Kali Devi Temple, Patiala, 2023.
- [4] Singh, K. Natwar. *The Magnificent Maharaja: The Life and Times of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala (1891–1938)*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2006.
- [5] Shri Kali Devi Temple. Official website. <https://mandirkalidevijipatiala.org/history> (accessed 2023).
- [6] *Kālikā Purāṇa* (ca. 10th century CE). Translated by B.N. Shastri. Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1991.
- [7] Temple Office: Festival Organizing Committee Logs & Participation Lists (2023); Field notes from 2023–2024.
- [8] Government of Punjab, Department of Tourism. <https://punjabtourism.punjab.gov.in> (accessed 2023).
- [9] Fieldwork notes from personal visits. Shri Kali Devi Temple, Patiala, Punjab, 2023–2024.
- [10] Field Interviews: Bhajan Mandalis & Navratri Volunteers, Patiala Temple (2023).
- [11] Kinsley, David. *The Great Goddess*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- [12] Śiva Purāṇa. *Rudra Saṃhitā*. Translated by J.L. Shastri. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973.
- [13] Flood, Gavin (ed.). *The Oxford History of Hinduism: Hindu Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.