



# The Feminine Fire

The divine creative force you hold within

Volume 1, Issue 3 – Summer 2008

## Embodying the Divine Feminine

### What Does it Mean?

At the conclusion of Jungian analyst Marion Woodman's wonderful book, *Dancing in the Flames*, she makes an impassioned plea for us to become aware that the most critical "job" we have right now is to *embody* the divine feminine. As many of you know, this is what much of my writing and many of my workshops have been about over the last eight years.

After teaching one of these workshops a few years ago in the Rockies, I was being driven to the airport by the organizer, Elizabeth. As we rolled along, I gazed out at the Rocky Mountains in the distance and thought what a perfect setting it was for the discussion on the divine feminine that we were having. Elizabeth was telling me how deeply she'd been moved by the concept and how, from the very first time she'd been exposed to the idea of embodying the divine feminine, she had longed to do it. She spoke about this in very abstract terms for a few moments and then said, bluntly, "But to tell you the truth, until today I really had no idea what 'embodying the divine feminine' really meant. And I had no idea how the heck to *do* it."

### How do you do it?

The moment she made this comment I felt like a boulder had rolled off one of the passing hills and hit me in the head. Immediately, I realized that if she had indeed gotten any specific information on exactly *how* to embody the divine feminine from my workshop it had been purely by accident: for it had never occurred to me that someone in the audience might be asking the eminently practical question "How do I do this?"

To say I was mortified by this realization is a huge understatement. But as Elizabeth and I talked further I realized that I had at least managed to communicate – if not as clearly as I should have – that in a certain sense you don't have to *do* anything to embody the divine

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feminine. This is because you already embody her. As discussed in my last column,<sup>1</sup> one of the most astounding discoveries I made when researching my last book was that Sophia, Shekinah, and Shakti – as found in Christian, Jewish, and Hindu traditions – all represent "God with us". They represent, in other words, the divine that is present in the here and now, the divine that is within, the divine we *experience*.

Unfortunately, in some ways hearing that you already embody the divine feminine is about as helpful as having a yogi tell you that all you have to do to reach the enlightened state of Oneness with God is simply realize that you are already one with God. Simple, yes. But like so much on the spiritual path – easy, no. With this in mind, Elizabeth's comments spurred me to spend a lot of time thinking about the practical steps we can take to realize that we do, in fact, already embody this cosmic force. And by *realize* I mean make it *real* in your life and, in so doing, discover how this embodied power can become an ever expanding source of inspiration and guidance in your life.

### A First Step

The first step in this is to become increasingly able to recognize her. One way

<sup>1</sup> To see past issues of the newsletter go to [www.teridegler.com](http://www.teridegler.com) and follow the links

to do this is to explore the ways Shakti, Sophia, and Shekinah have been portrayed in the sacred stories, myths, and legends of their respective traditions.<sup>2</sup> These stories reveal the ways she works and manifests herself in our lives. If you read about her in the Old Testament book of *Ecclesiasticus*,<sup>3</sup> for instance, you will discover that the Creator gave Sophia “in some measure” to every human being and to those who love God “in plenty”. This description of Sophia being “with us” even goes so far as to say that she was not just created once at the beginning of time, but that she is *re-created* when each of us is conceived and then grows along with us in our mothers’ wombs.

The traditions of Tantra and Hatha Yoga say something very similar but are even more emphatic: they tell us that Shakti is not only the life force that creates us in the womb, she is the cosmic essence that our bodies are made out of. Thus, while in Christian tradition, the body is sometimes thought of as the “temple” that holds the holy spirit; in Tantra, the body is thought of as being the temple *and* a manifestation of the spirit itself.

## A Second Step

Regardless of which of these concepts you are most comfortable with, this intrinsic relationship between Sophia/Shakti and the physical body leads to a very simple second step in the process of realizing your embodiment of the divine feminine – and that is simply to *be* in your body. Allow yourself time to sit with your physical self; allow yourself to *feel* what your body is feeling; experience your body. And become increasingly aware of the myriad blocks that keep you from honoring your body in this way. (More on these subtle and insidious blocks in the next issue!)

Ultimately, the goal of Woodman’s plea for us to embody the divine feminine is to become increasingly aware of the awesome cosmic power we hold within and to, in turn,

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<sup>2</sup> Many of these are revealed in the forthcoming *The Divine Feminine Fire* but until it comes out, I’ll be sharing some of these stories in future issues of the newsletter.

<sup>3</sup> The Biblical books that have the most references to Sophia (or Wisdom) are often referred to as the Wisdom books. These books are found in the Catholic Bible and in the Apocrypha of Protestant Bibles. A few of the Wisdom books like Psalms and Proverbs, are found in both.

become increasingly able to pour her sweet grace back out into the world that so desperately needs it.

Send an email to [teridegler@sympatico.ca](mailto:teridegler@sympatico.ca) to request a free copy of the article *St. Hildegard of Bingen: Yogini in Nun’s Clothing* and more on the relationship between creativity, kundalini-Shakti, and our spiritual growth.

## News from the Muse

I’ve been very busy over the summer months working with my agent to find the right publisher for *The Divine Feminine Fire: Creativity and Your Yearning to Express Your Self*.

I’m happy to announce that the book is being published by Dreamriver Press and the release date is planned for late Spring 2009. Details about the special offer on advance orders of *The Divine Feminine Fire: Creativity and Your Yearning to Express Your Self* will be available in the next issue of the newsletter!

## About Teri

Award-winning writer Teri Degler is the author/co-author of nine books including *The Fiery Muse: Creativity and the Spiritual Quest* (Random House of Canada). A long-time student of yoga philosophy and mystical experience, Teri is a widely experienced public speaker. She has taught workshops in the United States and Canada and has appeared on many national radio and television programs. For more information and to book her for workshops go to [www.teridegler.com](http://www.teridegler.com).

### Defining the Divine Feminine

Although it’s really impossible to define the divine feminine, I personally do not understand this to be a “Goddess” that replaces “God”. While I have the deepest respect for those who do believe this, for me God – the Divine, the Absolute, the Cosmic Spirit – is beyond gender. But I also believe that there are masculine and feminine aspects to the Divine, that we *experience* the Divine through this polarity, and that we hold both a divine feminine and a divine masculine within.

## Women Inspiring...

### Britta

About a year after *The Fiery Muse: Creativity and the Spiritual Quest* came out, I received a letter from a woman named Britta who had been born in Denmark. She wanted to share her story for my next book and, indeed, this story does appear in *The Divine Feminine Fire*. Britta and I corresponded until she died at the age of 91. Amazingly, in the picture here she was close to that age.

As a young woman Britta trained as a dress designer, married, and managed to hold her family together through World War II and its aftermath. When she was in her forties she became filled with spiritual yearning and began trying to hold Christ in her thoughts at all times, a practice she thought of as the "Jesus Way". One night two years later, it occurred to her to simply ask the Holy Spirit to come to her:

*"Then I waited without thinking. My brain was absolutely blank – I was just kind of listening. And then suddenly I felt energy starting at the lowest part of my spine – going slowly up my spine – but when it reached my head – I suddenly got afraid and then it didn't go further... The next morning when I woke up I felt as if I were in another world – and for three days after this I was in an intense state of peace, love, and happiness. I felt sometimes as if I were embracing the whole world. I was filled with love. And after this I was not the same anymore. For example, I was not able to say anything that was not absolutely true. I also felt more concern about other people, and I felt for a long time as if I loved everybody. This experience was, I think, not something that just "happened." It came out of hard concentrated work and a deep, deep desire to learn some of the Truths of what life is all about.*

Immediately Britta's artwork, once uninspired and mechanical, became "Picasso like". Even more astonishingly, she developed the spontaneous ability to write beautiful poetry. Unbeknownst to her, the

first of these was a bit of divine guidance that she'd be following the rest of her life:

*Write, write, write,  
The word I give you  
Spread it with the wind  
                  out over the earth  
Give it as life  
                  to hungering souls*



One day Britta called to excitedly tell me she'd been reading a book on yoga and the awakening of kundalini-Shakti and realized that this was *exactly* what had happened to her. She knew it didn't matter whether she called it an experience of Shakti or the Holy Spirit, the effect was the same: she had experienced a

transformation of consciousness.

Of all the ways Britta inspired me, the most inspiring is perhaps the fact that she never stopped listening to the inner light – call it Holy Spirit or kundalini-Shakti. The last time I spoke to her, at age 91, her daughter and granddaughter had just translated her poems into English and, thrilled, she was enthusiastically looking for a publisher! And why? Because, she said, *"All these years later I have just now realized that the poems in that book reveal a great deal about what we have to do to have a happy life."*

And that, she said could be summed up in one word, "Love"! Determined to pass on this love, she once wrote,

*Why do I get these thoughts?  
                  There must be a reason.  
Keeping them with me  
                  they must die with me –  
  
But when passing them on  
maybe someone  
                  in them will find  
                                  a small seed  
which may grow and flower  
                  to throw off new seeds.*

### Don't miss our next inspiring woman!

Exceptional artist and extraordinary woman  
– Sandy Brand ([see photo](#))

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## Creativity Exercise

### Embracing Transformation

In order for inspiration from the Divine Feminine to flow more fully into our lives, we need to embrace the process of transformation that this great cosmic power is conducting within us. We may, however, be unconsciously resisting it. This is because transformation implies change, and change is, of course, often painful. And being human we naturally want to resist it!

The best antidote for this is to become more deeply aware of how well Shakti – as the evolutionary energy within – has been running things all along: (To learn the technique in Step #4 [click here](#), then go to Creativity Exercises: “Inspiration – Just a Breath Away)

1. Go to your photo albums and pick three pictures that show you at three different stages, for instance, your childhood or teens, your thirties and now. If you're younger, just begin with childhood.
2. Arrange the photos chronologically in front of you and have a pen and at least three sheets of paper handy. Using your favorite method enter a deeply relaxed, meditative state where you are filled with light.
3. Allow yourself to go back in time and deeply reconnect with the person you were in the first photo. Recall what was happening in your outer world at the time, but focus on who you were inside – your values, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about yourself.
4. Bring your consciousness back to the inner light and, as you have learned in previous exercises, allow the light to flow upwards, concentrating and pulsing with your heart, and then to flow out your hands, through the pen, onto your paper.
5. Gently open your eyes and begin to note your impressions. Repeat this process for each picture, using a new sheet of paper for each one.
6. When you're done, compare these three stages. How have you grown? How have the aspects of your self that *really* matter changed? How have you been being transformed?

## Your Thoughts & Comments

Dear Teri,

I was particularly caught up in the idea of "lack" being the source of longing - for that is what I have always thought about myself. I am very caught up in animal welfare issues – harsh and horrible treatment of animals being something I lose sleep over – and I always thought that my devotion to the ducks and cats and birds that I befriend in High Park is because I'm single, don't have children, don't like my job, etc....

So when I read (in your last issue) that my longing for the world to be kinder to animals springs from my completeness, or my divineness, well - it was a life affirming moment for me, let me tell you!

Not that I'm completely over this idea of "lack" – I often feel I "lack" everything – including intelligence, creativity, street smarts, beauty, etc. – after 44 years of feeling lack, changing the channel in the back of my mind may prove to be a challenge to say the least!

Cheers,  
Anna Merrill

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Dear Teri,

Your newsletter did move me very much. As a Buddhist and a devotee of Amma, the Mother, Devi, Kali, Shakti herself, and also as a person who is about to retire from my freelance translator job to devote myself to more spiritual and creative activities, I cannot but think our meeting is totally in line with my present space. Thank you for being who you are and for doing what you do. I would very much like to receive your newsletter and participate in the exercises suggested although – since I am from Quebec – I would do it in French but I do not suppose that matters! I will also pass on your newsletter in the hope of attracting more people.

With deepest thanks and my best wishes  
Claude

## In the next newsletter:

- Explore the blocks to being “in” your body
- Meet Sandy Brand – one of the most inspiring women ever
- Do a creativity exercise that will help you deal with that harsh inner voice of criticism that so often threatens your creative expression

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