

The Feminine Fire

The divine creative force you hold within

Volume 4, Issue 1 Spring 2011

Finally Dancing in the Flames!

Fifteen years ago Marion Woodman ended her wonderful book *Dancing in the Flames* with the idea that bringing the divine feminine into consciousness was absolutely crucial for us at this time in history. Most readers, I'm sure, agreed that this was an excellent idea. But I also suspect few of us understood exactly what it might *mean*. My friend Oriah Mountain Dreamer summed this up very well in her endorsement of *The Divine Feminine Fire* saying, "While I intuitively share the often expressed conviction what the world needs is for us to embody the divine feminine, I sometimes suspect we don't really know what this means or what this would look like in an ordinary human life."

She goes on to very kindly say that *The Divine Feminine Fire* offers invaluable insights to this by telling the real life stories of ordinary women and how they experienced this in their daily lives.

Thanks to my travels doing workshops, to email, and to Facebook, I am meeting more and more women – and men! – who are embodying the divine feminine and bringing Her into consciousness in very concrete, tangible ways. And even though I've been talking and writing about embodying the divine feminine for years what it really *means* is becoming increasingly clear to me. And beyond this wonderful manifestation of the divine feminine in individuals, I am beginning to see its sweeping embodiment in consciousness for the first time.

One of the first signs of this was earlier this year when Jeff Brown posted his now renowned "Apologies to the Divine Feminine" on his blog and the piece went viral striking a cord with tens of thousands of people around the world.

Months before this the Women of Wisdom organization in Seattle had decided that the theme for their 2011 annual conference would be "Unveiling the Power of the Divine Feminine". Held in February, the

In This Newsletter:

- [Dancing in the Flames](#)
- [News from the Muse](#)
- [Women Inspiring...
Kavita Byrd](#)
- [Do a Creativity
Exercise](#)
- [About Teri](#)



conference was a huge success. After having the honor of presenting a workshop there, I was off to a gorgeous mountain resort in the Okanagan for a Wise & Wild Women retreat featuring sumptuous food, wine, and accommodations along with inspiring speakers. Although the only official mention of the divine feminine was in the title of my talk, the concept seemed to be on the tip of everyone's tongue. What's more, Oriah – who wasn't able to be at the retreat – wrote a special blessing for it called "An Invocation to the Divine Feminine" that, thanks to Facebook is now spreading around the globe.

As soon as the Wild & Wise Women retreat was over, I was off to give a talk at Grail Springs, a magnificent spa and resort on a lake near Bancroft, Ontario where the ingenious, inspired founder, Madeleine Marentette realized that it was 100 years since the first Women's Day was held in England in 1911 and decided to mark this milestone with a month-long celebration of International Women's Day with a "tele-retreat" called "Women of Destiny" that would feature 100 different women speakers who would communicate with individuals around the world in daily one-hour tele-seminars.

I was extremely honored to be on the launch phone call with Paula Fellingham, a woman dedicated to improving the lot of women around the world and founder of the www.InternationalWomensDay.org website. Paula made the insightful point that as education, training, and social programs

lift women around the world out of poverty, they are increasingly able to move from sheer survival mode to one of sufficiency. Those of us who are already blessed with this state of sufficiency should be moving on to the next stage – one where we dedicate at least some portion of our lives to being of selfless service and helping to lift others out of poverty and despair.

The insightful moderator of the tele-seminar, Kari Henley, used this as a segue into *The Divine Feminine Fire* and how this concern for humanitarian values and social justice is one of the primary characteristics of the embodiment of the divine feminine.

The last I spoke to Madeleine Marentette she had close to 1,000 women signed up for the month-long phone series and women like Barbara Marx Hubbard and Joan Boryshenko were scheduled to speak...

Coincidentally (if you believe in coincidences!), during the lead-up to all the divinely feminine inspired events I was preparing the “Women Inspiring Women” piece for this issue of the newsletter on Kavita Byrd – a woman who is absolutely dedicated to bringing the divine feminine and the qualities she embodies into the world consciousness. These qualities include inclusiveness, compassion, caring, connection, co-operation, co-creation, and peace-making combined with an intuitive awareness and emotional openness.

Just think for a moment about what a contrast these feminine qualities are to the aggression, violence, domination, and destruction that characterizes so much of global culture today – and just think what a soothing balm, what a healing salve our efforts to spread them around the world can be....

News from the Muse

The first Women’s Day was held in Britain in 1911. To mark this anniversary Grail Springs Spa & Resort founder Madeleine Marentette decided to celebrate International Women’s Day with daily tele-seminars for the whole month of March “called 100 Women of Destiny.” It was an honor for me to be asked to speak on the launch day March 1st and a real privilege to be part of the 100 women that included Lynn McTaggart, Barbara Marx Hubbard, and Jean Shinoda Bolen.

A recording of all the conversations from the 100 Women of Destiny Tele-Retreat is now available for a very reasonable price.

<http://www.100-women-of-destiny.com/>

SageWoman Review of DFF

There’s a really wonderful review of *The Divine Feminine Fire* in the current issue of *SageWomen Magazine* written by artist Lyssandra Eyers. Check out her wonderful artwork! And there’s a copy of the review on her blog. <http://www.lyssandra-designs.com/welcome.html>

Workshop Thank You!

Doing recent workshops at the *Women of Wisdom* conference in Seattle, the *Wild & Wise Women* retreat in B.C. and *Grail Springs* in Ontario have given me the opportunity to meet even more amazing women!! This is truly the very best part of giving workshops...thanks to all of you who attended....

Upcoming workshop/talk dates:

Grail Springs Spa & Resort

April 8-10, 2011

Bancroft, Ontario

<http://www.grailsprings.com/Events>

Wonderworks Bookstore

Wednesday, April 20, 2011

7:00 pm

79A Harbord Street

Toronto, Ontario

<http://www.gowonderworks.com/>

Juicy Fridays at Wonderworks Bookstore

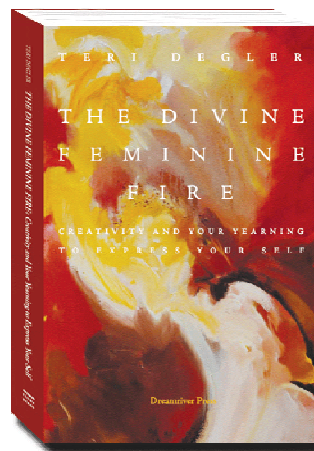
Wednesday, June 3, 2011

7:00 pm

79A Harbord Street

Toronto, Ontario

<http://www.gowonderworks.com/>



Order your copy of *The Divine Feminine Fire* in the U.S. from amazon.com or Barnes & Noble; in Canada from amazon.ca or Chapters-Indigo

Women Inspiring... Kavita Byrd

The original idea for my “Women Inspiring Women” column was to showcase women I’d interviewed and met in my workshops whose stories I wasn’t able to fit into my books.



The story of this month’s inspiring woman was, however, told in *The Divine Feminine Fire*. But this woman, Kavita Byrd, has been doing so much and leading such an inspiring life since then I’ve decided to give

you an update on her fascinating journey.

Kavita, always a pioneer, attended Princeton in the days when the school was first beginning to accept women. After graduating she began a spiritual search that, as recounted in *The Divine Feminine Fire*, took her from working as a gardener in a near paradise that she found on an unspoiled Greek isle, to studying yoga in ashrams in India and Australia. When the book left her she was based once again in India, and she has remained there for most of the intervening years. There she has been studying and practicing the teachings of non-dual spirituality, Advaita Vedanta, near the famed ashram of Sri Ramana Maharshi in Tiruvannamalai, South India. Recently she has been living at Bodhi Zendo, a Zen retreat not far away in the Perumal Hills, a pristine mountain setting where she can continue to practice quietly in a non-dual tradition. While there Kavita has also been able to begin to make concrete strides towards her goal of helping to bring the divine feminine into consciousness.

As is told in *The Divine Feminine Fire*, Kavita’s early fascination with the divine feminine began when she was on the Greek isle. There her work, first as a goatherd and then as a gardener, gave her time to simply sit and immerse herself in the awesome beauty of nature that surrounded her. As she did, she became increasingly

conscious of energy patterns that were moving around her and within her. She also began to feel her consciousness expand and to perceive a unifying principle that wove its way through all of creation. The first time she associated this interconnectedness with the divine feminine, Kavita was working in the garden and looking out across the sea to a mountain on another island that the villagers called the Sleeping Goddess.

“I used to love to gaze across at her and feel her peace and stillness. I would open myself to the sense of eternity she radiated...From another point on the island, I could also see the mountains on the mainland in the distance, overlapping each other in the sparkling light of sunset, like waves pouring into the sea. This also felt to me like the melting of time, of earth into water into pure light, and myself melting into their Oneness. Later on I found out that the island where I was living was on the fault line of the huge volcanic explosion and tidal wave that had once destroyed an advanced civilization on Crete and Santorini thought by archaeologists to have worshiped the Divine Feminine. I felt that this “wave” of the Divine Feminine had somehow ripped through time itself and broken into me.”



This sense of connection with the divine feminine never left her. Years later she found herself looking for a centre or retreat focused on the divine feminine and feminine principles of compassion, cooperation, co-creation, and inter-connection – a centre that would foster intuitive awareness, emotional openness, and peace-making, the qualities she felt were so desperately needed in a world where the opposite characteristics – violence, aggression, and domination – were rampant. She says, “After years of living in ashrams and spiritual communities, under male teachers and patriarchal traditions, I

had become more and more convinced of the importance of bringing in the feminine, creating a place and a paradigm that integrated feminine wisdom and values, as well as more actual women teachers and leaders into spirituality and society....At the same time I could not help but see the violence, political, and environmental, escalating at an alarming rate everywhere in the world – and it clicked; I knew that this had to do with the missing feminine voice. I began to see that the key to the disconnect between spirituality and its principles of peace, interconnectedness and Oneness, on the one hand, and the current state of our world, on the other, was the missing influence of feminine values in the places of power....”



Kavita was unable to find a centre that fulfilled her vision. So, in true trail-blazer fashion, she started to think about how to found one. Undaunted by seemingly insurmountable obstacles, she sat down, created a proposal based on her vision, and began sending it out. One of the many encouraging responses was from Dena Merriam, founder of the Global Peace Initiative of Women, a growing and powerful group of women. (See sidebar.)

With the support of GPIW, the vision for the center is moving forward. It has been given an official name, The Shakti Center, and there is now a core group supporting the concept that includes powerhouses like Jean Shinoda Bolen, Sharon Salzberg, Joan Borysenko, Elisbet Sahtouris, and Andrew Harvey. Kavita's next step is to create a website that will be a "virtual" center and will encourage even more support and the funding needed to make the center an actual physical reality.

Knowing Kavita's inspiring spirit, I have every confidence the Shakti Center will come into physical as well as virtual being.

Kavita is quick to give others credit for the progress that's been made so far, and – true spiritual seeker that she is – she's loathe to put herself forward in any way. Still, I know how Kavita has inspired me over the last decade, and I'm sure it is this ability to inspire that has moved the vision of the Shakti Centre to this point and will continue to move it forward.

But it isn't so much Kavita's ability to bring a vision into reality that inspires me as the fact that she is *doing* it. She is walking the talk. For the last many years, she has lived an idyllic life in ashrams in South India, most recently in the Zen centre perched on a ridge in the stunningly beautiful Western Ghats and overlooking verdant sub-tropical valleys. She could easily have chosen to do nothing more than remain in places like this following her inner spiritual journey. But Kavita realizes that at this critical time in history the divine feminine is calling us to what she calls "sacred activism" – a call to action that demands each one of us do what we can to bring about a world of equity, justice, sustainability, and interconnection. In short, a world that truly manifests global Oneness.

Inspiring Words from Kavita

The inner feminine creative fire has led Kavita down many pathways, from writing her first book of published poetry, *Love Songs of the Undivided*, to inspiring her to give harmonium lessons when she was nearly destitute in India. It also led her to study the healing arts and become a craniosacral therapist. It is now spurring her to write her new book, *Journey to Wholeness: The Role of the Feminine in Unity Consciousness and Global Transformation* and, especially, to be the impetus behind the creation of the Shakti Centre. About this process, she says, "*I've become aware of a fascinating dynamic between deep meditation and the creative connections that seem to magically spring out of it. And that is this: when we are tuned into that deep place where everything is interconnected, everything begins to connect at the top, the surface of consciousness and our lives too. And this is what I feel is behind this whole story, the kind of synchronicity happening around the unfolding of the Shakti Centre projects, and the greater birth of this new level of unitive consciousness that it is part of!*"

From...
Love Songs of the Undivided
by Kavita Byrd



***My heart makes love
In secret silence
To all that is.***

***My womb gives birth
To the universe
And my breasts
Suckle the stars.***

***Who knows near or far
In this cave of silence
Whose earth is the sky
No one sits but all
Existence.***

***I am this
Which never dies
Which rocks the seas of being
In its dreams
And cradles all creation
In the infinite unseen.***

The Shakti Centre

The Shakti Centre is intended as a living intentional community, a sanctuary for spiritual practice and an international center for research, healing, creative expression and social change, helping to bring the values and wisdom of the feminine into contemporary spirituality and society. It would serve as a base for an alliance of women spiritual teachers and wider organizations of women and men working for inner and outer peace through new integrative paths to spiritual, psychological and global healing. Our vision is to create an inter-spiritual, integrative paradigm that at the same time embraces the values of the feminine so needed to bring balance into the collective consciousness today, as a vital basis for world peace and transformation.

The Global Peace Initiative of Women

The Global Peace Initiative of Women (GPIW) was founded to help awaken and mobilize spiritual energies in places of great need with the goal of aiding in healing and unifying the world community. GPIW facilitates this by seeking to gather together those of great insight, wisdom, compassion and dedication, many of whom are working quietly for the upliftment of the world. A major focus of GPIW's work is to aid in building a global network of contemplative leaders who through their inner work can help transform the causes and conditions that lead to suffering at both the individual and collective level. This work is under the stewardship of a group of women spiritual leaders and practitioners. It is GPIW's mission to help manifest the special qualities of the Divine Feminine, or Shakti, which enables the inner transformation now required for us to meet the challenges facing the Earth's community of life.

<http://www.gpiw.org/>

Do a Creativity Exercise

One of the first times I heard about kundalini someone described it saying "It is the sexual energy – the life energy. When it goes outward in procreation it creates new life. When it goes upward (i.e. up the spine) it creates new life in the brain." While this is an incredibly simplistic definition, the relationship between the words *pro-creation* and *creation* is no coincidence. To create we need to be in touch with the life energy that nestles in our pelvic region. Freud was well aware of the relationship between sexual energy and creative energy/expression but he thought creativity was the sublimation of sexual energy. Not so!! It is the *movement and the transformation* of sexual energy.

For this exercise, begin with the basic "inspiration" creativity exercise:*
http://www.teridegler.com/Newsletters/TFFnewsletter_Vol1_Issue1.pdf

1. When you see the light gathering and intensifying at the base of your spine, imagine your pelvic area as a basket.
2. Sit with the feelings that arise from this area for some time.
3. Most of us assume these are merely sensations – sensations that needed to be ignored, suppressed, or released in some way! But this is not merely sensation! It is Shakti – the creative force of the universe, the life force itself – making herself known.
4. Visualize the radiant life energy filling the basket and intensifying.
5. Move your focus to the basket itself, see it clearly, in detail. Focus on the immensely powerful life energy – the creative energy of the universe – that swirls within it... Spend some time with it. How does it move? What colors does it take on? What images arise in it?
6. Allow the light to rise up and flow out as in Exercise #1 – allow yourself to write, paint, dance, or find musical notes to express the basket, the energy, and/or the images you've seen.

*Remember that even though these are called creative visualization exercises, not everyone "sees" with their inner senses....we all have different ways of sensing our inner worlds and they are all valid and effective...

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, or to book her for workshops, go to teridegler.com.

From Lyssanda Eyers' review of *The Divine Feminine Fire* in the current issue of *SageWoman Magazine*:

Teri Degler's brilliant work of scholarship and wisdom connects mythology to our spiritual and creative journey and the awakening of the Divine Feminine. By decoding texts from religious and mystical traditions and delving into the mysteries of kundalini energy, Teri has been able to identify the Divine Feminine Fire as a source of empowerment already embodied within us. This cosmic force, also known as Shakti, Shekinah or Sophia, is not just the voice of the feminine, or the divine within, or of our higher self, but it is the force itself. Teri helps us to understand this force, how it exists within, how it manifests, and how it propels our spiritual journey and boosts our empowerment and self-expression. We know this power as the yearning we feel to help others, to heal, to grow spiritually, to express our creativity and to transform our self and the world. Teri (gives us) the life stories of both historic and contemporary women and ... teachings on how to "fire-up" our creativity and birth our own passions, desires, projects and visions....

Women have always had access to the Divine Feminine within, but Teri gives us the actual steps we can take to recognize this energy, make it real, and discover how the embodied Divine Feminine can become an ever-expanding source of creativity....

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