



FIVE

Honoring the Feminine

*Namaste, I see you as a sister, mother, daughter, wife, and feminine divine.
You are the Shakti, the essence, the heart, and the source of life.
You are in everything, and everything rests on you.
Your laughter is the music of life.*



If a culture holds the view that the Divine Reality from which we have all descended is both male and female, then our reincarnation back and forth between male and female bodies takes on new significance. In either form, we are in a form that reflects the beauty and secrets of one-half of the Divine. We are also simultaneously learning about both the terrestrial male and female by having a gender-based body/mind and interacting with the opposite body/mind. In an “I see you as the atma” culture, this can lead to a much more profound and sacred view of the male and female genders.

Although both genders reflect the secrets of Divinity, both sexes will generally agree that the female wears more of her beauty on the outside and that without being trained to see her as the atma, men around the world have a tendency to be distracted or blinded by her beauty. Being able to see a woman’s atma, along with her beauty, is a





universal safeguard for both protecting her and balancing the social environment.

With no such vision or safeguard in place, multiple problems have resulted. With unrelenting intensity, the European and Western world has pushed for female rights but has at the same time gradually come to use female beauty as an inducement to buy products. Her body has become a public (degraded) rather than a private (sacred) vision. Her beauty is used to control and agitate the mind and induce consumption literally through addiction. It could be argued that exploitation of the female body as a product has run parallel with the exploitation of the nonrenewable energies of Mother Earth. It may not be a coincidence that the development of the internet has been largely funded by pornography, making access to a degraded vision of her beauty ubiquitous. The great hope of international communication has, in a sense, emerged from the womb of females, but not in a conscious or elegant way.

It is a credit to James Cameron's skill as a filmmaker that, although the Na'vi in *Avatar* were scantily clothed, he managed to create beings with an open, assured, and natural relationship with their bodies. They also exhibit a self-respect and sacred mentality, reflecting the ease of Indigenous cultures' acceptance of their physicality. In the film, Na'vi women are powerful, independent, and yet respected for skills unique to both their individuality and their gender. If WeQ is intuition and direct perception, it is self-evident that many women come naturally equipped with more of these insightful emotive skills, vital for a sustainable relationship to the Earth. Further in the film, there was also a deep sense of both feminine mystery and her likeness to the All Mother. Traditionally, the Indian culture, exemplified in the two *Avatar* epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, felt this connection so deeply that they behaved as if the honor, protection, and empowerment of women were the same



as honoring and protecting Mother Bhumi. They saw, as *Avatar* also indicated, the female energy as Mother Nature.

The Sanskrit name for this female energy is *Shakti* [shock-ti]. A similar word appears in Judaism as the female grace of God that descends upon a Jewish household on the evening of the *Shabbat* (the Sabbath on Friday night). In Hebrew she is called the *Shekinah* and manifests while the woman of the household lights the menorah (the seven sacred candles). Likewise, one of the names of Mother Nature is Shakti Ma—the Mother of all energy. According to the teachings of the Avatars, everything that exists in nature has a male aspect and a female aspect of Shakti, which in reality are never separate. Knowing this, a human male and female do not come together simply for sexual union, for pleasure and/or reproduction, but as an expression of the two fundamental principles of Nature, consciously cooperating with love to make all life possible. Of the two genders, virtually all Indigenous cultures agree that the female energy is the most remarkable and, as the gate of life, must be given the deepest respect, protection, and understanding.

The Vedas explain that in the beginning of this Universe, the Creator, Brahma, asked the original man and woman: “Who would like to perform the meditation to bring forth life?” The woman volunteered and sat at the center of the circle. Seeing that, the man took a vow that he would protect with his life the circle where the woman sat. Being vulnerable by reproduction, because the woman can more easily be violated and because she is the direct link to the Mother of All, the woman’s body is sacred, and all noble men are obliged to protect her rather than exploit her. At its most severe, we have come to see rape as a weapon of war. What is done to women is also done to Mother Earth. The female is directly connected to Her heart and so acts to protect all life whenever possible.



As Above, So Below

The Vedas tell us repeatedly that the male and female forms that we see all around us—and that are also embodied within each of us—are literally made in the ‘image of the original Supreme Male and Female Beings. The original Male and Female Supreme Beings are the prototype—a Mr. and Mrs. Divine—who live for eternity in the Transcendental realm (and that’s a long time!). All this does *not*, however, mean that Male and Female Divines are two different Beings—they are not. You might want to read that last sentence again. This is a great secret of the Avatars. They are *two* aspects of the *same* Being—and, according to the Vedas, are eternally in love and never tiring of the other’s company. Inconceivably, simultaneously, one and two.

These Male Divine and Female Divine forms are replicated in all that is created from them. Just as when humans make a baby, that child has genetic material from both parents. It is a step-down kind of process into matter. As the original emanations of the Supreme Male and Female forms enter matter at the highest level, they become Mother and Father Nature. In this role, one of them now has an extender (Father Nature) and one a receiver (Mother Nature). At the cosmic level, the Veda says, there is a mother who is the sum total of all matter. This means that all the countless Universes are part of Her body.

As we descend further down the scale of creation, a single Universe is also an organism with a Mother Nature and a Father Nature intertwined, embraced, and dancing, if you will—cosmic genetic material unfolding. A Universe is the result of Father and Mother Nature embracing and remaining intertwined.

All of nature is also held together by the union of “male and female” bonds. Modern science describes this as positive and negative or electrons and protons, but in the visioning of ancient wisdom, Nature is not impersonal—She is intensely personal. The Sun, for



example, is considered male, and the Sunshine female. Together, they comprise our experience of the Sun. Just as we say human married couples are “one flesh,” so the Sun and the Sunshine are married—a sort of Mr. and Mrs. Sun. Another example is the rose and its fragrance. The structure of the rose is masculine, and its scent is the Shakti; together they are the rose. If the two divorce, there is no rose. If the Sun and Sunshine divorce, there is no life.

Finally, continuing the descent, planets are also Mothers with “families” of amazing entities living on their bodies. This is Earth. Mata Bhumi. And stepping down even further—and even though the atma is neither female nor male—our bodies as mothers, fathers, and children are the sacred containers made from the descending emanations of the original Male and Female Supreme Beings.

As we learn to see all beings as divine, this Avatar lesson is meant to deepen that process for you. In properly understanding and honoring the female, our intention and attention should start at the *highest level* of creation within matter. When we namaste—“I see the real you”—we can now be aware that we are not only saying, “I see you as the atma,” but also, “I see your atma shining *and* your *body* as the sacred image of the Transcendental Divine.” This practice creates a deep reverence for the female (and also the male) and helps displace our tendency to objectify her endless beauty due to our lack of understanding.

Starhawk, a teacher in the Celtic and Pagan traditions put it this way: “The Goddess does not rule the world. She is the world. Manifest in each of us, She can be known internally by every individual, in all her magnificent diversity.”

On Earth, we all understand the woman is the giver of life, the gate of birth (a true sacrifice). This genius of the woman to profoundly create in countless way is evident to most anyone watching:



woman is—like the Earth—the endless giver and worthy of the greatest honor, love, and protection. When this fails, the Avatars start to make plans.

Each female, then, is the Shakti of some aspect of the All Mother. In one sense, she contains all aspects of Mother Nature, but she is also empowered in specific ways. This is also largely true for a culture. The women of a culture are its Shakti—the repository of all the customs and subtle nuances of the society. They are the librarians and the libraries at the same time. This is why “Miss Manners” is never “Mr. Manners.” The Shakti is our reliable and ever-present guide to our ancestors and holds them in her womb, not only to produce another being but as a continuation of the history and legacy of the ancestors of her culture. For this reason, conquering or neighboring kings often attempted strategic alliances with other countries by marrying that country’s princesses. This was not for passion—as kings by their power and wealth could already have as much sex as they desired. The princesses were to be their “Miss Manners”—not only to extend their power, but to guide them in socially and politically correct behaviors.

This *Wisdom Female*, who is central to the plot of the two Avatar epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, is the missing priestess in our current global culture. Her presence in Cameron’s film *Avatar* was another brilliant and timely reminder of what we have forgotten.

Where the representative of Mother Earth Herself is not consulted, heard, honored, and deferred to in our councils and assemblies, we who represent the original voice of Bhumi are concerned, sad, and offended. It is the Shakti, after all, who must be honored and protected if we are to sustain human life with compassion and integrity.

In *Avatar*, both the Male and Female are leaders, each with unique powers and dignity. They cooperate for the good of each other and all. In order for this to take place, we must first tell a story of the



beauty and value of each gender. They must be equally valued for their empowerments and skills. For men—for the warrior—this means that their physical strength should be dedicated to the protection of all who are innocent, women, children, and the elderly, from all cultures. This is, for example, the Way of the Samurai. No “enemy” is ever a woman, child, or elder. This has been the ethos of the best Indigenous cultures. In India, the great epics—the Avatar stories—are both about the descent of the Divine Being to fight the ignorance and evil that threatens Mother Earth, demeans the female, and leaves vulnerable those who are innocent.

Notwithstanding the present-day debasement of the female as a product on the internet, or under the heel of fundamentalist religion, another and very hopeful development has been evolving over the last hundred years. Just as thousands of years ago, the spiritual and intuitive arts reached a high level of perfection in India and other cultures, so our technological phase of evolutionary development today has reached its pivotal moment. We have weapons of mass destruction that can destroy all life in a moment, yet we dare not use them. Simultaneously, we are tampering with aspects of the genetic basis of all life, putting our future in the hands of profit-only scientists and corporations. Still, a significant proportion of the world has internet and cell-phone access with friends, colleagues, and lovers in every nation. Films like *Avatar* are now box-office hits around the globe. In the midst of the IQ crisis, and despite the horrific treatment of women in some places, millions of women in many countries are standing up into a new kind of power, influence, and freedom.

The yoga movement is an example of this transformation. Unlike coercive or proselytizing religions with billion-dollar budgets for converting the pagans, yoga has spread quietly and without the use of force, budget, or fanfare. Yoga and the Vedic view from which

it emerged, by definition, stands against promotion by force, let alone demanding a monaural religious conclusion. Yoga demands no earthly intermediary. In its myriad of forms, it begins with our bodies and how we live on Earth. It encourages a platform of healthy eating and living as a vegetarian or as low on the food chain as possible. At its simplest, in the very asanas (poses) that are done across the globe by millions every morning, yoga seeks our balance, harmony, and cooperation with Nature and one another. It encourages so-called moral values—restraints and observances to maximize both health and peaceful interaction—ideas generally valued by all religions at their best. Yoga's creed, if it has one, suggests that we discover our true nature and live accordingly but by consciously doing the least possible harm to all beings, called *ahimsa* [ah-him-sa] in Sanskrit, and teaching by personal example rather than spouting platitudes. To quote a modern-day yogi Mahatma Gandhi speaking the wisdom of the Avatars, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." Yoga discourages the use of intoxicants and harmful foods. Yoga advises that sexuality should be healthy, integrous, consensual, and sacred—and again should cause no harm. Worship in many forms, including those promoted by the many faiths across the world, as well as the many Vedic paths, are simultaneously supported yet never demanded.

Unsurprisingly, then, it is estimated today that at least 80 percent of the yoga practitioners worldwide are female. Globally there are some thirty million Indians living outside of India. Yet inside India, both now and in the past, one does not see millions of females practicing physical yoga, which has been a traditionally male practice. To the yogi, this poses an interesting question: is it possible that the millions of female yogis who are quietly changing the world by the practice of yoga, by the way they spend their money, by seeking a balanced life in an unbalanced world, were all yogis in India in a

previous life? Perhaps they are the vital helper cells in Mother Earth's immune system. The underlying viewpoint, perhaps unspoken or even unconscious to many—but self-evident by their desire to practice yoga—is that we must find a more balanced, more flexible, healthy, and less destructive way to live on Mata Bhumi. This is also the message of the Avatars, who by definition have descended, and always descend to bring the world back to balance. The female, in her present-day power, in her developing WeQ intelligence, is now talking to the male IQ intelligence about a new kind of relationship, mediated by 3rd IQ perception and supported by both Father and Mother Nature.

Bowing to the Wisdom

In the animal world, the female bird is clearly in charge of the nest. Our own intelligence should tell us that the being made to carry babies, protect them, and feed them would also have a built-in intelligence for the preservation of all life. Of course women have this. And as we look at the environment today, or at countless cultures, it is also strikingly obvious that the genius of that life-affirming voice is not being sufficiently listened to. We are at a historical moment that clearly tells us, if we're listening, to honor the feminine, protect her gift, and ask her to please speak more. For women, this should not be one more task on an already impossibly long list. It should simply be part of our learning to listen. To say, "I see you—the giver of life, bounty, beauty."

In the Vedas, the maintainer of all is called Vishnu, and his Shakti (the female energy), his female accomplice, is Lakshmi—also known in English as Lady Luck (from *lak*). This suggests that the ancient secret is to let the maker of life decide how we live, what we eat, and even how money should be spent. In poor countries, over and over again it is evident that men, when under pressure or disem-



50 ❁ Jeffrey Armstrong

powered, actually waste money. Microfinancing groups give about 98 percent of their funds to women for this reason: women under pressure are better with money.

Whether we see it in the rich countries or not, this world is under pressure.

Every day, individually, we can make a conscious effort to hear from the female about how to live on our planet. This is a start. And ask for it elsewhere. It's no coincidence Mother Earth is female. Would it be a surprise that the All Mother speaks more easily through women? Of course not. In a balanced world, compassion and concern for the good of all occur more naturally in women. Exceptions excepted. The Avatar teaching is that we, as men, should listen very carefully to the wisdom voice coming from the Sacred Feminine. At this most crucial hour, this is the descent, this is the return of the Great Mother.

