



Divine  
Feminine:  
Longing,  
Piercing  
and the  
Dark

By Jeannie  
Zandi

"You cut me open and I keep on bleeding love."

--Leona Lewis (modern pop song performed recently two Taos teenage girls)

Not long ago I dreamed friends wanted me to come upstairs from a dark basement to meet some people. I ascended, realizing as I climbed that my pupils were fully dilated as if still in the dark. Reaching the people, my pupils had not changed and I could not see. Moreover, I had no active principle in me, receptively present to the depth of my being, which was bottomless night. At their mercy, I was unprotected even by the veil of a social face. Blind to the lit world and ecstatic, I turned toward them as an ambassador of the gorgeous dark, entirely open and given.

We are afraid of the dark. We are afraid of death, sickness, need, longing, grief, rotting, decaying and the void. What is hidden within us in darkness, and what we have grown to fear and loathe, is the realm of the Divine Feminine. To understand Her through linear methods is impossible: only through experience, through initiation, are we allowed to come close. Many are now being called to Her, through illness, tragedy or the draining of meaning from our lives, because her wisdom is critical to the healing and wholeness of our souls and our world.

The Divine Feminine doesn't oppose the masculine, but embraces and blesses the whole of everything. Qualities of the Divine Feminine are present in both women and men, and are needed to draw us into our depths and thus our full spiritual potential. Speaking of the feminine clearly and freshly is challenging: she is hidden, many of her aspects have been so denigrated we believe they are valueless, and many concepts surrounding her have become cliches and linked with a wounding fury. Yes, there is pain where the feminine has been desecrated, burned and tortured, where her wisdom has been buried under derision and fear. This must be honored. Yet we cannot afford to splinter into dualistic battles when reclaiming these energies is so critical to the healing of the whole. We have all lost from her banishment and we all stand to gain when the energies of the Divine Feminine are rewoven into our lives.

Reclaiming this ground is not easy, much of it gunked up with dismissal, devaluation, and contempt, especially the pathways to Her transformative powers. The way is dark, guides are few and the harpies are loud and convincing -- they live inside and outside us and therefore sound real. When we travel into these lands within ourselves, the conditioned negativity rises and we feel terrible about ourselves, which feels like a sure sign to turn back. However, the deep space of feminine receptivity and unknowing, her understanding of the interrelatedness of life, and her nourishing waters and sheltering dark are so vital for the healing of our world that it is worth traveling back through the territory of thou shalt not throw like a girl, cry like a girl, need like a girl or love like a girl.

Softening and opening is a big part of where we go when we journey to the feminine -- what is softer and more open than an accepting vagina or the warm inside of a fluid-filled womb? We are meant to live open, and we must reclaim our way there. So many beautiful faces are hardened in stress, over-mentality, protection and separation. It is possible, without the world changing a bit, for us to re-inhabit these sacred waters and hold this shelter and healing out to each other as sanctuary.

I can hear the protests of all who carry the wounds of rape, abuse and humiliation. Soften, are you nuts??? It's true we are vulnerable to forces that don't know what to do with an open soft place other than colonize, plunder, poke and humiliate it. And it is possible to learn the ways of the warrior alongside the ways of the flower and restore what has been scared into hiding its rightful throne, manifested on this planet. The focus of reclamation seems to dance of its own accord back and forth between the poles of heart and warrior, reweaving a tapestry of wholeness -- the stronger and clearer I get, the softer and more open I can be. As I explore the strength of my physicality and groundedness, the clarity of seeing what is true, and a right to my voice, I witness a shift then to softening, receptivity, and the ability to open to interdependence.

Denying the soft depth of the feminine mystery affects all of life - when we separate life from its holy essence we cut the world off from energy that can nourish, heal and transform it. A disembodied god and a world in which matter is unholy is devastating to the feminine. It is injurious to cast a whole realm of human experience, much of which is native to women, into a dark cavern of banishment. We are so confused about reality that we see our instinctive wisdom as pathology, attack ourselves for it and try to rid ourselves of it, leaving us with a deep mistrust of ourselves that makes us vulnerable to manipulation and control.

Here I will describe a couple vital initiatory aspects of the Divine Feminine as they have been coming to consciousness in my experience: longing (opening to a burning ache for something it seems we need) and piercing (meeting an experience wholly and allowing it to penetrate us to the core). These are aspects that have been somewhat vilified in a culture obsessed with mastery. To reclaim wholeness is not only to reclaim the sword of clarity and strength, it is also then to use what we have learned to set a throne for a kind of vulnerable softening and opening that replenishes our souls, relationships and world from within.

## Longing

In an auditorium, face wet with tears, I watch my friend Ty passionately play tablas, and listen to Krishna Das sing from his heart devoted to God. A burning ache in my heart, for Man, for Masculine, for God, opens a well inside that I have grown to adore in its bittersweet mindless black depth. I have experienced it many times: as a child trying to kiss my brother's coat fast enough to avoid his punch, longing to be invited into the mysterious world of his boy room, games, and friends; lying in bed, my mother ironing in the hall, wanting her without a way to reach in my emotionally distant family; sobbing when the distance between my heart and my boyfriend's seemed impossible to cross; home from college locked in an embrace with my soon-to-leave father who was

divorcing my mom; and on mushrooms facing a terrifying darkness no one else seemed to notice that filled the bar.

Our culture calls this something to get over. We keep ourselves from these doorways to the dark, and with derision born of fear or in the name of "helping," encourage others not to go either. Discomfort (the first sign of impending transformation) is seen as something to control: figure it out, fix it and thereby eliminate it. Mind and will partner in brutalizing this soft underbelly, hardening to keep it away, making ourselves less affect-able and above reproach from the wandering police of the hyper-masculine within us and without. Anything but soften, open and allow it.

But we are affect-able. The web of wedded creation uses us to long through for itself. Women are wired for this softening and opening and it has everything to do with our longing for the Holy. We don't need more therapy to eradicate this. No matter how many sessions we have on our dads, brothers or boyfriends, the Feminine will ALWAYS long for the Masculine, and we are not wounded or whacked or missing something because of it. Just as the iron filing is drawn to the magnet, the electron is drawn to the proton and the gravity of the earth holds our sweet bodies to her, we were born to long. Longing is the Feminine expression of divine love.

In all this pining I found why Hafiz wrote: "Let your loneliness cut more deeply." In early experiences of burning for what I could not have, a fullness rose out of my emptied cup to fill it to the brim. Out of the fertile void, shaky young places would become sturdy. What worked on a small scale might be magnificent if I were completely denied satisfaction! So I prayed arrogantly, "Give me nothing that I want." An unimaginable dark night ensued. Surrounded by and filled with desolation, I felt separate from God and was forced to plumb my own bottomless well. Longing is a guide that leads us into a potent purification for the heart wanting to be emptied of all but gold.

Through longing, the interconnected web of life expresses relatedness. Not only are there young places to burn off and a divine alchemy that fills the empty heart, but longing has a vital role in our relationships. We ARE inextricably related. Where we know this, we relate in an interlaced and interdependent way. When one acts as though he or she is separate, the whole web feels it, and we feel it in our bodies as longing. We are wired to call each other back into connectedness. We might not know how yet, but we have the wiring.

Piercing

Pain (emotional, physical or spiritual) is a piercing for those of us willing to open to being divinely mastered. We have been taught the opposite -- that we are to master with mind and will. Granted this can be useful when a greater need is present, such as saving a life, or defending a village. After the battle though, returning to a tender human heartfulness serves the return to the community. We have overdone this hardening to our detriment and forgotten the rituals of a softening return. A valuable skill during times of great challenge has become a way of life. We harden and cut off the energetic exchange with the matrix of life, sealing ourselves into cells of separateness as our unhealed pain throbs inside, creating illness, violence, dullness and misery.

To be pierced is to allow the shell of protection to break, exposing and drinking the elixir of our innermost. Last year I had some work done on a frozen shoulder which entailed the doctor sticking a 5" needle into the joint, poking around and injecting fluid. I had witnessed the progress in my shoulder and was committed to the process. Yet as I lay on her table during the final treatment, tears streaming down my face from the pain, I considered for a moment clocking her and running out of the room. Instead I yielded beyond my concept of an ability to do so, allowing this piercing to have me. I let it take and tenderize me until I was powdered. Never had I felt so given, so crushed, and so filled with Beauty.

After I told this story during a talk, someone brought me a copy of a photograph of Bernini's sculpture "The Ecstasy of St. Teresa." St. Teresa reclines in a totally blissful swoon, mouth open, head back, eyelids half-mast, hands and feet limp while a curly-headed young angel with a loving smile stands above her, holding the spear of God. Divinity piercing the human body, heaven piercing earth, spirit piercing matter. St. Teresa describes her experience as follows:

"I saw in his hand a long spear of gold and at the iron's point there seemed to be a little fire. He appeared to me to be thrusting it at times into my heart and to pierce my very entrails. When he drew it out, he seemed to draw them out also and to leave me all on fire with a great love of God. The pain was so great that it made me moan and yet so surpassing was the sweetness of this excessive pain, that I could not wish to be rid of it. The soul is satisfied now with nothing less than God. The pain is not bodily, but spiritual; though the body has its share in it. It is a caressing of love so sweet which now takes place between the soul and God that I pray God of his goodness to make him experience it who may think that I am lying."

This was the experience of that hour on the table and the same experience during the birth of my daughter, when the pain of contraction came minutes apart, and I crouched

howling like a dog. Arrogant about my ability to handle pain, I yielded to the contractions. However, I was unprepared for the final moment when Sophia's head dropped and a force like the muzzle-loading of a musket moved through my body from the top down. Until then there had been some illusion of control. Feeling the power of the force that would birth my child, I instinctively bowed the lowest internal bow I could imagine, knowing I had come in contact with the terrible power of the Lady (I was going to write "Lord" but it's fun to play in here -- we have stripped ladies of this terrible power, though anyone who has been in relationship with one surely knows it.). Pierced and mastered, I was a portal through which delicious clouds of revitalizing, nourishing feminine energy bathed the room.

To long and to be pierced, to open to the dark and be mastered, to take the doors offered to Her mysteries and to fling them wide open in a passionate embrace with the Holy, spilling divine healing juicy energy to the four corners of the earth. We can bring this wisdom back if we are willing.

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