

Suffering, Feminist Theory, and Images of Goddess

Rita M. Gross

A concern with finitude is emerging in feminist theology.¹ Generally feminist theologians say that conventional theology has sidestepped the issue of finitude, another demonstration of its general eagerness to identify "man's" experience with divine reality. The counter-proposal generally recommends that finitude be accepted more realistically and forthrightly; in addition, those who work with Goddess imagery invoke the Goddess of Birth and Death, the Lady of the Round.² At least in my experience, the encounter with finitude as it has been expressed so far has been somewhat superficial. Furthermore, the emphasis on finitude contradicts another, probably more dominant, emphasis of feminist theology to date—the contention that, minus patriarchy, the world would be a utopia.³

Utopias and finitude seem to me to be in inherent contradiction. I will explore that

contradiction here. My major points are that our experience involves an irreducible suffering that has nothing to do with patriarchy, that is simply a constituent of being human. Furthermore it seems important to me that we, as feminists, come to terms with that irreducible suffering which will endure even in a post-patriarchal utopia that has eliminated all unnecessary suffering. I am concerned about coming to terms with this basic suffering, not only because I am interested in seeing more clearly what is the case but also because I think there is enormous potential in the experiential awareness of basic pain. That experience, that consciousness has the potential to move feminism past some of its more bothersome tendencies and to make feminism more mature.

Running through this entire discussion, of course, should be the clear and consistent awareness that I am not suggesting that we

accept suffering about patriarchy not by allowing it to be wrought think explicated feminist begin with the post begin The references to the image of the Goddess who supports and incarnates both birth and death begin to deal with my concern in a way, but thus far, I think they are somewhat superficial.

That superficiality, I think, comes from the fact that thus far when discussing finitude, we have discussed images of the Goddess who supports finitude more than discussing our own experience of finitude. There has not been enough discussion of why that image of the ambivalent Goddess is necessary, of the experiential base that gives rise to it. From our critique of conventional theology, we know that theology must begin with experience and then move from experience to concepts and images.

To say we have not considered our experience of suffering may seem incorrect; after all, the starting point of the whole women's movement was the pain of our existence under patriarchy, our frustration, the discrimination and exclusion we experienced. Every person significantly involved in any

facet of concern with women and religion has her particular personal story of that general experience.

Recently, for about the past year or year-and-a-half, I have begun to think that there was actually an inevitable over-simplification in our reflections on our experiences of pain and frustration. The degree to which they were caused by patriarchy and—thus senseless and unnecessary—was so obvious, and our awareness of that stupidity was so strong that there was little room for anything else. It was easy to assume, and I think most of us did, albeit more unconsciously than consciously, that without patriarchy everything would be wonderful. Alienation and frustration as well as inadequacy would disappear. Now I want to take issue with that whole attitude. I want to separate out a level of suffering that simply is not patriarchy's fault.

My thesis may or may not seem obvious. If there is irreducible pain, constitutive of human experience, that surely is not due to patriarchy. And on one level the impossibility of eradicating all pain and suffering is so obvious that it would seem that everyone would automatically concur that, of course, the end of patriarchy will not mean the end of suffering. However, generally people do not really concede the impossibility of eradicating suffering, even though glib concessions abound. That may account for the fact that I know of no discussion in feminist literature that tackles the issue of what feminism can cure and what it cannot cure.

What is the irreducible pain that I contend feminism can't cure? Furthermore, why is it important for feminists that the issue even be

addressed? Last, what implications for feminist theory and practice are inherent in my thesis?

I

First, feminism can obviously critique and offer alternatives to the current institutional and relational arrangement of our social and religious milieu. I have no doubt that the feminist program for social transformation would induce a revolution in the quality of life and that this revolution would promote the best possible social arrangements. Furthermore, feminist theory can do a great deal to assuage the peculiar sense of inadequacy and frustration women experience by providing coherent explanations of our situation and attractive alternative philosophies. I also think that this psychological well-being actually is more crucial than transformation of social and relational institutions. In short, feminism can deal with the peculiar inadequacies we suffer as a result of being women under patriarchy, but, at least in its current formulations, it does not address itself to the inadequacies we experience as humans whose existence is finite.

To take finitude seriously, as feminist theology encourages, to me means serious, experiential encounter with our human limits. There is no cure for the limits of our birth and death, and much of the pervasive sad-

ness that haunts us between birth and death is simply part of our humanness and will not go away even with the best possible social arrangements and the most positive psychological environment. There is still a void at the center of existence; the hunger for confirmation is never satisfied, and relationships do not stop the pain of aloneness. No security is really possible; and finally there is death. Feminism cannot eliminate such finitude; it can only accommodate it. So when we embrace finitude as our concern and our contribution to theology, we should be very clear that concern with finitude can ring true only in the presence of real submission to limits. That means something of a basic psychological reorientation in which an understanding and acceptance of finitude is deeply internalized. That reorientation involves, not *believing* that our lives are finite, but *knowing* it thoroughly, knowing what it really means about our lives and our dreams.⁵

II

Why, it might be asked, should feminists concern themselves with this kind of self-transformation? Why worry about dealing with residual pain when there is so much non-residual pain still around?

The answer is not merely that there is something suspicious about stating a theoretical position that takes finitude seriously

This paper was presented at the National Meetings of the American Academy of Religion, New York City, Dec. 1979. Because it catches my spiritual journey at an important point, I have not revised it for publication. This paper is companion to my 1985 AAR paper, "I Will Never to Visualize that Vajrayogini is my Body and Mind," forthcoming in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*.

patriarchy as part of that irreducible. The kind of suffering I am talking about is neither an excuse nor a warrant for suffering, and the claim that suffering can be eliminated is never a justification for unnecessary suffering, like that caused by patriarchy, to continue. But I also have sufficiently and thoroughly rejected the patriarchal demon from feminist theology to the point that we can go beyond such exercises. Indeed, the emergence of Goddess thea-logy in the last several years, feminist theology has done much positive and post-critical work.⁴ References to the image of the Goddess supports and incarnates both birth and death. I begin to deal with my concern in a way that thus far, I think they are somewhat superficial.

My superficiality, I think, comes from the fact that thus far when discussing finitude, we have discussed images of the Goddess who transcend finitude more than discussing our experience of finitude. There has not been enough discussion of why that image of the ambivalent Goddess is necessary, of the essential base that gives rise to it. From the critique of conventional theology, we must begin with experience and then move from experience to concepts and images.

Maybe we have not considered our experience of suffering may seem incorrect; after all the starting point of the whole women's movement was the pain of our existence under patriarchy, our frustration, the domination and exclusion we experienced. Every person significantly involved in any

facet of concern with women and religion has her particular personal story of that general experience.

Recently, for about the past year or year and-a-half, I have begun to think that there was actually an inevitable over-simplification in our reflections on our experiences of pain and frustration. The degree to which they were caused by patriarchy and—thus senseless and unnecessary—was so obvious, and our awareness of that stupidity was so strong that there was little room for anything else. It was easy to assume, and I think most of us did, albeit more unconsciously than consciously, that without patriarchy everything would be wonderful. Alienation and frustration as well as inadequacy would disappear. Now I want to take issue with that whole attitude. I want to separate out a level of suffering that simply is not patriarchy's fault.

My thesis may or may not seem obvious. If there is irreducible pain, constitutive of human experience, that surely is not due to patriarchy. And on one level the impossibility of eradicating all pain and suffering is so obvious that it would seem that everyone would automatically concur that, of course, the end of patriarchy will not mean the end of suffering. However, generally people do not really concede the impossibility of eradicating suffering, even though glib concessions abound. That may account for the fact that I know of no discussion in feminist literature that tackles the issue of what feminism can cure and what it cannot cure.

What is the irreducible pain that I contend feminism can't cure? Furthermore, why is it so important for feminists that the issue even be

addressed? Last, what implications for feminist theory and practice are inherent in my thesis?

I

First, feminism can obviously critique and offer alternatives to the current institutional and relational arrangement of our social and religious milieu. I have no doubt that the feminist program for social transformation would induce a revolution in the quality of life and that this revolution would promote the best possible social arrangements. Furthermore, feminist theory can do a great deal to assuage the peculiar sense of inadequacy and frustration women experience by providing coherent explanations of our situation and attractive alternative philosophies. I also think that this psychological well-being actually is more crucial than transformation of social and relational institutions. In short, feminism can deal with the peculiar inadequacies we suffer as a result of being women under patriarchy, but, at least in its current formulations, it does not address itself to the inadequacies we experience as humans whose existence is finite.

To take finitude seriously, as feminist theology encourages, to me means serious, experiential encounter with our human limits. There is no cure for the limits of our birth and death, and much of the pervasive sad-

ness that haunts us between birth and death is simply part of our humanness and will not go away even with the best possible social arrangements and the most positive psychological environment. There is still a void at the center of existence; the hunger for confirmation is never satisfied, and relationships do not stop the pain of aloneness. No security is really possible; and finally there is death. Feminism cannot eliminate such finitude; it can only accommodate it. So when we embrace finitude as our concern and our contribution to theology, we should be very clear that concern with finitude can ring true only in the presence of real submission to limits. That means something of a basic psychological reorientation in which an understanding and acceptance of finitude is deeply internalized. That reorientation involves, not *believing* that our lives are finite, but *knowing* it thoroughly, knowing what it really means about our lives and our dreams.⁵

II

Why, it might be asked, should feminists concern themselves with this kind of self-transformation? Why worry about dealing with residual pain when there is so much non-residual pain still around?

The answer is not merely that there is something suspicious about stating a theological position that takes finitude seriously

This paper was presented at the National Meetings of the American Academy of Religion, New York City, Dec. 1979. Because it catches my spiritual journey at an important point, I have not revised it for publication. This paper is companion to my 1985 AAR paper, "I Will Never to Visualize that Vajrayogini is my Body and Mind," forthcoming in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*.

while not actually experiencing the force and impact of that truth in one's consciousness. More important are some subtle but basic changes in mood and attitude that occur when one gives in to one's finitude. These changes reshape both feelings about one's self and one's relationship with the world. These changes are very hard to specify exactly, but in general, a softer, lighter touch can be expected. There is an immense relief and release and consequent bubbling over of spontaneous energy. Tremendous strength and a new, less problematic relation to suffering result. One might say that there is a kind of imperturbable calm, whatever the situation. That indestructibility permits a gentle and powerfully effective mode of relationship with the world.

That acknowledging limits and basic pain should bring a lighter touch rather than heavy somberness, a kind of invulnerability to suffering, rather than increased suffering might seem to be a strange claim. However, classic Buddhaharma makes the same point in its statement that when the four noble truths are fully recognized, they are all understood at once. When the first truth, the truth of suffering is really understood, so is the third truth, the truth of the cessation of suffering. However, I am not speaking in this context out of academic knowledge of Buddhism—I am speaking of the impact of spiritual discipline and my feminism—and I hold that to be an entirely different matter from academic knowledge of Buddhist doctrine.

Perhaps, however, if looked at more closely, the logic could become clearer. If people do not self-consciously and thoroughly submit to limits and the pain inherent in them,

they unconsciously—and perhaps consciously—believe that everything could be perfect, only. . .” and that “things will be without any frustration or anxiety when. . . .” Such persons are neither very pleasant to be around nor do they enjoy their lives very much. The constant struggle only makes the pain greater, and if there is a basically painful undertone to existence, the struggle to produce ultimate happiness will never end. It is a self-feeding cycle of creating additional pain on top of basic pain. On the other hand, accepting limits means that we no longer struggle to achieve the impossible; and from relaxing the struggle, a basic *unmanufactured* cheerfulness arises. Therefore, finitude and cheerfulness are compatible, whereas the belief that we could be completely at ease someday only brings more dis-ease all the time. Of course cheerfulness releases much more creative and effective energy than does never-ending, always unsuccessful, struggle. Thus, we can actually accomplish much more through an experiential acceptance of finitude.

III

In addition to this general impact, several specific problems of feminism dissolve in the softening warmth attendant on accommodation of finitude. The potential of feminism to become a dogma or oversimplified panacea is averted. Because it is realized that feminism, as such, won't meet all our needs and the accomplishment of its goals will leave us with residual, irreducible pain, we do not overestimate its potential. Thus, politics, the quest for power, and so on, although obviously

not actually experiencing the force and of that truth in one's consciousness. Important are some subtle but basic changes in mood and attitude that occur when one gives in to one's finitude. These changes reshape both feelings about one's self and one's relationship with the world. Such changes are very hard to specify exactly. In general, a softer, lighter touch can be effected. There is an immense relief and a consequent bubbling over of creative and new energy. Tremendous strength is brought about, a new, less problematic relation to suffering is the result. One might say that there is a kind of unperturbable calm, whatever the situation. That indestructibility permits a gently and powerfully effective mode of relationship with the world.

By acknowledging limits and basic pain, one can bring a lighter touch rather than heaviness, a kind of invulnerability to suffering, rather than increased suffering might be a strange claim. However, classic Buddhist hadharma makes the same point in its teaching that when the four noble truths are recognized, they are all understood at once. When the first truth, the truth of suffering, is really understood, so is the third truth, the truth of the cessation of suffering. However, I am not speaking in this context out of academic knowledge of Buddhism—I am speaking of the impact of spiritual discipline on any feminism—and I hold that to be an entirely different matter from academic knowledge of Buddhist doctrine. Perhaps, however, if looked at more closely, the logic could become clearer. If people do not self-consciously and thoroughly submit to limits and the pain inherent in them,

they unconsciously—and perhaps consciously—believe that everything could be perfect, “if only. . .” and that “things will be without any frustration or anxiety when. . .” Such persons are neither very pleasant to be around nor do they enjoy their lives very much. The constant struggle only makes the pain greater, and if there is a basically painful undertone to existence, the struggle to produce ultimate happiness will never end. It is a self-feeding cycle of creating additional pain on top of basic pain. On the other hand, accepting limits means that we no longer struggle to achieve the impossible; and from relaxing the struggle, a basic *unmanufactured* cheerfulness arises. Therefore, finitude and cheerfulness are compatible, whereas the belief that we could be completely at ease someday only brings more dis-ease all the time. Of course, cheerfulness releases much more creative and effective energy than does never-ending, always unsuccessful, struggle. Thus, we can actually accomplish much more through an experiential acceptance of finitude.

III

In addition to this general impact, several specific problems of feminism dissolve in the softening warmth attendant on accommodation to finitude. The potential of feminism to become a dogma or oversimplified panacea is averted. Because it is realized that feminism, as such, won't meet all our needs and the accomplishment of its goals will leave us with a residual, irreducible pain, we do not overestimate its potential. Thus, politics, the quest for power, and so on, although obviously

necessary tools, cannot quite be the be-all and end-all into which feminism sometimes makes them. Nor, for that matter, can feminist theology or Goddess symbolism or anything else. When we try to get more out of them or out of feminism as a whole than they can give us, they become traps, insuring constant restlessness and feelings of unfulfillment. Feminism (or any other ideology or cause) without acceptance of finitude could become quite a monster.

It also seems that surrendering to finitude does a great deal to defuse and break up that solid lump of anger and rage that chokes most feminists at some point in time. Because of thoroughgoing surrender to limits, slowly there arises a kind of invulnerability to pain that has nothing to do with avoiding, repressing, or not feeling pain. In that kind of consciousness, protracted, brooding anger does not come up. This happens without any loss of will to effect changes, for the energy to press for reform does not depend on anger. Furthermore, anger is seldom the launch-pad for effective action. In fact, intense, prolonged anger is one of the most counterproductive and unpleasant emotions that one can endure. It poisons one's own consciousness and makes relationships difficult. Something that can cut through and defuse that anger, which is completely different, of course, from repressing or denying it, seems to me to be extremely valuable. Besides providing psychic well-being for ourselves, we can then be much more skillful and effective in dealing with non-feminists than when everything troublesome produces an intense reaction.

The relaxation that results from being a

feminist who has given up on feminism as the final solution, from being a feminist whose anger is stilled while her motivation is undaunted, seems to me to be quite valuable. This relaxation promotes a general sense of well-being and ease about one's self, which in turn permits warmer relationships with the whole world. The increased effectiveness in dealing with non-feminists is only half of it: we might actually be able to deal with males significantly and honestly, on the common basis of shared basic finitude. Since separatism is obviously a short-term solution to patriarchy, and in some ways, a pathological inversion of patriarchy, coming to such a real basis for equalitarian communication is invaluable. But I also emphasize that it depends on the combination of a non-apologetic and a relaxed manner that results from experiential concession to limits. There is no need to vaunt one's insights either. True strength has no need to be aggressive.

Having considered some of the implications of experiencing finitude, the question might arise as to how one actually comes to appreciate limits—which is a completely central question if one is doing more than expressing a belief that we are finite. At this point, I want to return to the concern with which I began my remarks, namely the image of Goddess as symbol of the coincidence of opposites, imaged as Lady of the Round, Mistress of Death and Birth. I contended that though there has been glib devotion to this image, issues of *Womanspirit*⁶ have not displayed much experiential understanding of the image. However, I would also want to contend that this image is central to feminist theology's embrace of finitude because it is

one possible symbolic expression of the experiential base I have discussed. Therefore, contemplation of the image, by itself, can bring the kind of accommodation to pain that I am recommending. An appropriate spiritual discipline, one that promotes "groundedness" rather than "spiritual materialism,"⁷ should be practiced⁸ along with contemplation of the image.⁹

In any case, the image of the Goddess who manifests and demonstrates the coincidence of opposites well illustrates all my concerns and has always been a major resource for me. Whether or not one chooses to work with goddess imagery, the insights communicated by this image are an expansion and a specification of feminist theology's general claim that finitude must be taken seriously. Therefore, I would like to discuss the image at some length, as much to promote the ideas it expresses as to promote Goddess imagery, *per se*. And, as I usually do, I will turn to the Indian images of Goddesses, especially Kali, that have nurtured me for so long.¹⁰

Many details are found in icon after icon: the long tongue stretched to lick up blood, multiple arms holding a curved knife, a skull-top containing fire, a club, a severed human head, and so on, hands in the symbolic gestures signifying "granting gifts" and "fear not," a garland of skulls or heads, the skirt of human hands and arms, the bones, headless corpses, jackals, and fires of the charnel ground, long loose flowing hair, a halo, an attractive body, serene calm face or fierce face in other icons, and often, the God Siva prone beneath her dancing feet or *yoni*.

Other variants of this motif present similar details.

The symbolism is generally called coincidence of opposites symbolism because the point being made is that one Goddess patronizes both death and life, creation and destruction. She is both fearful and attractive, to be both feared and loved. Her hands form the symbolic gestures that say, "fear not" and "giving gifts" at the same time as they hold severed heads and curved knives. She is involved with sexuality and death at the same time. This kind of interpretation is so commonplace as not to need elaboration.

However, I want to emphasize the link between this interpreted image and the experiences I discussed earlier. The image arises out of and speaks to a deep understanding of one's own finitude, limits, and suffering. To see the image only as some comforting statement of the eternity of the round is, I think, totally to miss the deep, existential message about our own lives, projects, and dreams that it conveys. They will not last, and they will not work, ultimately. That is fundamentally the way things are, and no amount of struggle against it can change those basic facts. That is what we are talking about when we say that feminist theology accommodates finitude, not some abstract idea of an everlasting death and rebirth cycle which we can watch from a safe vantage point and affirm. We are talking about our own nitty-gritty finitude. I think that has to some extent been glossed over thus far.



IV

This level of understanding gives birth to another. Though it is quite difficult to see that finitude means *one's own* finitude, that realization also leads to the realization that finitude, one's own limits and pain are essentially not problematic. That is the reason for the other side of the coincidence of opposites symbolism—the whole layer of the image that says, "Fear not." The "fear not" is not particularly "Fear Not—finitude won't get to you" but rather, "Fear not—your finitude is no problem." In fact, accommodating, really accommodating it existentially, has quite surprising effects in terms of a basic cheerfulness and creativity which now manifests. We can take the whole idea of finitude much farther than we have. It is much less abstract and

much more personal in its impact than we have thus far realized.

Though I learned this understanding of finitude under the impact of a spiritual discipline, I did not initially expect it to have any impact on my feminism. I could readily apply it to interpretations of much Hindu material but I am now beginning to see other evidence for the centrality of this accommodation to women's well-being. Though I am not an ancient near-eastern specialist and I cannot spell out the historical details, it seems quite obvious to me that part of the transition from pre-patriarchal to patriarch religion and culture involved rebellion against the image of the Goddess of the coincidence of opposites, that is to say, rebellion against the experience that gave rise to it. People began to dream of something beyond the closed round and to imagine that they could identify with it, thereby denying finitude and attaining some sort of perpetual existence. When finitude became the enemy, women, whose intimate involvement with the finitude of birth, life, and death could not be overlooked as easily as could men's involvement with these processes, became feared and denigrated. The Goddess who had been the symbol of the whole accommodation to finitude was even more radically suppressed. I think the links between the extinction of the imagery of the Goddess of the Great Round, the beginnings of mysogyny, and the success of patriarchy, with its symbol of a transcendent deity who is nevertheless imaged as male and said by his followers to be offended by female imagery, are too obvious and dense to be overlooked.¹¹ I am also con-

vinced that all these elements form a complete constellation that rises and falls as one entity. Therefore, because I am concerned about the dignity of women, I am involved in the rediscovery of the Goddess, most especially those images that remind us of our finitude and break us in to it—even when that means we also must revision feminist hopes and dreams.

Notes

1. This assertion is so basic to feminist theology as not to need demonstration. The essay now regarded by many feminist theologians as the forerunner, before its time, of the current wave of feminist theology has this point as a major thesis. (Valerie Saiving, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View.") An early influential essay also makes this point. (Rosemary Ruether, "Mother Earth and the Megamachine.") Both are reprinted in *WomanSpirit Rising: A Reader in Feminist Theology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979).

2. This tendency is particularly pronounced in feminist theology of the post-Christian and Wiccan persuasions. See Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979).

3. Feminist theologians of the radical separatist point of view probably present this dream most strongly. One need only recall the apocalyptic vision of the collapse of patriarchy in *Many Daly Gyn/Ecology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), pp. 414-424.

4. See Starhawk, op. cit.; Naomi Goldenberg's *The Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979). Carol P. Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological and Political Reflections," *Womanspirit Rising*, pp. 273-287, and Rita M. Gross, "Hindu Female Deities as a Resource for the Contemporary Rediscovery of the Goddess," *UAAAR*, Vol. XLVI, No. 3 (Sept. 1978), pp. 269-291. Since the writing of this paper, Christine Downing's, *The Goddess* (New York: Crossroads, 1981) has gone even further.

5. To someone who knows the sources, this paragraph articulating finitude "sounds very Buddhist." That is true, but what is important for me is that the experiential quality arose

from meditation practice. I had long known these concepts in a theoretical way but their power had been unavailable to me and thus also their relevance for feminist theology. Therefore, for me to have cited classical Buddhist sources would have been quite inauthentic to the experience of how I came to feel what I was writing. Furthermore, in the long run, these pages, as any pages of theological writing, must stand or fall on their own ringing true, not on reliance on classical sources.

6. Now no longer published, this journal was for many years an important means of communication in the Wiccan movement. Though it clearly empowered many women with ecstatic, rapt portrayals of powerful Goddesses and uplifting rituals, it did not provide a profound spirituality because, in my view, it did not understand what it means to say that the Goddess really is both giver and taker of life.

7. Spiritual materialism is a somewhat technical term coined by Chogyam Trungpa to refer to the kind of spirituality popular with many spiritual seekers of the seventies. It involves the use of spiritual techniques to promote bliss as the major aim of spiritual life. He says sanity or mental health, which comes from experiencing reality without projection or delusion is much more central to spiritual practice.

8. This passage is a cryptic reference to my meditation practice—*Samatha-vipasyana* or mindfulness-awareness practice. I had been practicing meditation for four years when I wrote this paper, and it was exceedingly clear to me as I wrote the paper that in fact, the entire paper was a result of the profound transformation meditation practice was effecting. Nevertheless, at that time, in academic contexts I was still a closet Buddhist. *Samatha-vipasyana* is taught as basic practice by my guru, Chogyam Trungpa, a Vajrayana Buddhist. Similar practices are *zazen*, taught by Zen Buddhists and *vipassa*, taught by some Theravadin teachers.

9. In Buddhist techniques of teaching, there are three progressive stages of learning—hearing, contemplation and meditation. All three are necessary for real understanding, which is why I am sceptical that contemplation, even of extremely provocative and profound Goddess symbolism, by itself, brings experiential transformation of consciousness. Though I had loved Kali for years, I understood her much more profoundly after my experience of serious meditation practice.

10. The picture of Kali used to illustrate this paper has been published in Rita M. Gross, "The Second Coming of the Goddess," *Anima*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Fall 1979), p. 55. Portrayals of Kali can be found in almost any book on Indian art. The best discussion of her theology is David Kinsley, *The Sword and the Flute* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975). An excellent collection of devotional poems to Kali is Ramprasad Sen, *Grace and Mercy in Her Wild Hair* (Boulder: Great Eastern Books, 1982).

11. This point is much more commonplace at the time of publication than at the time of writing.