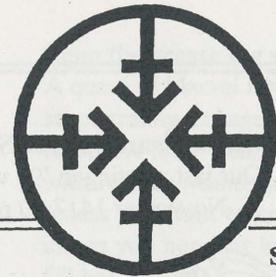


# gender quest



THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF KINDRED SPIRITS

SUMMER 1998

## Transcending Gender: a spiritual imperative

by Zantui Rose

"I view gender  
as a beautiful animal  
that people often take out for a walk on a leash  
and might enter in some odd contest to try to win strange  
prizes."

– Hafiz, Persian poet, 14th Century

Talk about transcending gender, is talk about a Spiritual movement. What we have been calling bi-polar gender expression may be more at home on a continuum. It is evoking a rainbow of expression that holds no division lines, a movement of personal energy that expresses itself in many directions. It is coming to a vibration that has the freedom to go anywhere, to swing, to twist, and turn creatively. It is talk inviting us to let go of the restrictive notion of the division of the male-female polarity based on conditions constructed by the present-day science of our system.

I'm not talking about androgyny or homogeny. I'm talking about movement – now here, now there... all, some, none – a spiral of continuance of expression. Nothing is closed, and nothing is out of bounds, because there are no boundaries to trespass.

When you hear the words "transcend gender," note how your conditioned mind immediately resists the possibility of moving beyond such a fundamental assumption as gender. It is very difficult to be aware of this conditioning because we have actually become the conditioning. A new perspective is required which shows us how to look beyond the illusion which has been created by the conditioned mind. Unfortunately, the brain tries to create solutions to problems which it created in the first place. We cannot continue to use the tools that were designed by the conditioning to break through the illusion of gender. That simply won't work. That toolbox must be retired, and an opening must be made for a new perspective to come through.

Every time you find yourself saying, "But gender is..." you are going back into the old toolbox. Wake up.

Throw it away. Division by gender is simply outdated and counterproductive. Gender is a system that was created to separate and control rather than encourage our full self expression. The awareness of transcending gender is imperative as a part of our next evolutionary shift of consciousness.

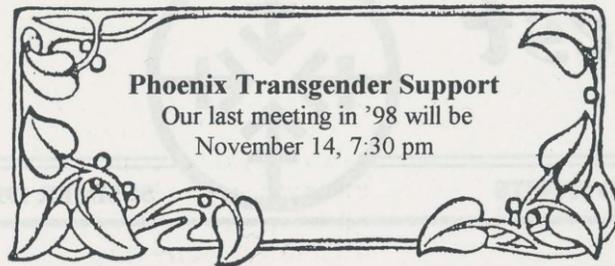
When we question the separation of humanity into two genders, we challenge the primary tenet of a system that teaches us fear and a false value in dividing and conquering. The teaching of judging racial and cultural variations divides us further. Authorities to which our fear based mentalities have given power to – psychologists, politicians, religious leaders – have insisted on the present day separation of women and men, because these dynamics are the scaffolding of the system that sustains their authority. The division of humanity into two genders is the most long standing and rigidly enforced of all stereotypes. We are obsessed with gender division, as it has become our cultural glue. The entire perception of this illusion must be challenged and eventually transcended. We must commit ourselves to the dismantling of gender in order to move further towards Truth.

When any one of us unplugs from even one aspect of the conditioned illusion, it pulls out one piece of the energy that has helped to create it. Eventually, there is no longer enough energy to keep creating the illusion, and it dissipates. In this moment of dissipation, we have an opening, an opportunity to find Truth.

In order to find Truth, I will say again, a perspective is required that shows us how to look beyond the existing illusion. The illusion that Spiritual teachers talk about is the belief that the material world is all that exists, or that it has more power than the world of energy. We have created a material world of gross relationships. A thing is either one thing or the other, or some greater or lesser version in relationship to one of those polarities. Thus we have a male and female bi-polarity.

In the world of pure energy, sublime relationships exist and there are no static opposites. All is one, and everything progresses from one to the other in a never-ending circle. Can we evolve from a species creating the concept of gross relationships of gender opposites, to having the wisdom of sublime relationships – all of us parts of the same whole – a continuum of the immutable Truth? Aren't we all, each of us, a piece of the Divine Creation? When one steps into the greater world of pure energy, this package we call our individual energy frequency, takes on a new wholesome perspective.

*continued on last page*



**Phoenix Transgender Support**  
Our last meeting in '98 will be  
November 14, 7:30 pm

### Kindred Spirits Finds a Home

Our dream is about to come true. By the end of 1999, Kindred Spirits will have a very special place to visit and to call home. Thanks to Zantui Rose and other "angels", we will soon build a two-story round house to serve as a year-round guest facility – replacing the Bed & Breakfast in Asheville that we have offered these last two years.

So we are moving to Black Mountain (half an hour from Asheville) to offer a much more secluded and nurturing space that will serve us all in an even more spiritual way. It's a magical place, in the midst of natural healing energy, that is easily accessible as "the front porch to the Great Smoky Mountains". It has 350 acres of hiking trails, wildflowers, creeks, a waterfall, and a promontory view toward Mt. Mitchell. Black Mountain is a charming town with all the amenities, and a rich history.

This new facility will also serve as a very accommodating site for Kindred Spirits gatherings throughout the year, with auxiliary camping. In addition, Dixon Mountain (1 hour west of Asheville, & only 2 miles from Max Patch) will be available for wilderness camping, vision quests, sweat lodges, and other ceremonies.

### A Call for Kindred Spirits to Host Circles

Some of you who have circled with us already, know how ready you are to host your own circles. For others, it may seem a little premature. But for any of you who honor the true path of Spirit, and are called to gather others around you – "in a good way" -- we who have been doing this encourage you to host your own Circles in your own special locations. Our circles, after all, are about transgenerating in spirit.

And you – in that same Spirit – are welcome to do this in the name of Kindred Spirits – if you choose. In this way, our vision and energy will ripple out in a more spontaneous and natural flow. Christina Comeau is already in the process of doing this in Ottawa, Canada. Jessa Bryan in Albuquerque, Cheryl Costa in Maryland, and others have done this in the past. Is it time for you?

Feel free to call upon us here in Asheville – or upon any other resources you like – for any information or support you may need. And by all means let us know what you're offering so that we can publicize it in this newsletter. Far from trademarks and franchising, we encourage convergences of loving spirit among kindred spirits at any place, and any time.

### Other Queer Spirit Events

We can rejoice in the fact that there are quite a few other focal points like ours. In late September, the Earthlight Center near Asheville hosted an incredibly visionary retreat entitled "Beyond Gender: Remembering the Gift". This was all about empowering us to heal and then assume our natural role as "wayshowers". Phone: 828-649-9628

Up in Brookfield Massachusetts, there is a private camping space for transgendered people called Dee-Ann's Place, that hosted a special weekend primarily for transgendered people back in July. Phone: 508-867-8027

Gay Spirit Visions, based in Atlanta, hosts a wonderful array of events, some of which take place at The Mountain in Highlands, NC. They most always embrace Radical Fairy Men, who bend gender in delightful ways. Write: GSV, PO Box 339, Decatur, GA 30031

The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual LGBT Spiritual Gathering was hosted in New Mexico Sept. 3-7. This magical event embodies earth-centered spirituality for all queer people in a transcendent way that honors everyone's truth. Write: The Gathering, PO Box 25582, Albuquerque, NM 87125

Last year, Inside Out '97 in New York City hosted their 1<sup>st</sup> Conference & Celebration of Spiritual Paths in the Queer Community. Write: Spirit Crossroads, PO Box 1133, NY NY 10009

### In Gratitude

There are so many people who have contributed to Kindred Spirits in its various venues. All of these people (though we struggle to name them all) are to be thanked and honored in a very special way, but for now, let us mention a few of their names: Wendy Parker, Merissa S. Lynn, Jessica Britton, Yvonne Cook, Holly Cross, Jessa Bryan, Angela Bright Feather, Marriette Pathy Allen, Karla Maar, Sandra Cole, Dallas Denny, Callan Williams, Annie Johnson, Alison & Dottie Laing, Jessie McGowen, Liana & Aubrey Cox, Carla Pridgen, Dyana Lea, Donna & Dee Kirkpatrick, Kimberly Carlson, Terri Peterson, Jill Enquist, Marisa Richmond, Scot Nunnery, Tamlyn Boswell, Michelle LeFree, Laura Ritchie, Christina Comeau... the list goes on.

And we hope, most earnestly, for your continuing support as we endeavor to create the round guest house/retreat space in Black Mountain, which will serve us all for many years to come.

### Kindred Spirits Retreats & Guest House

Founded in 1993, and dedicated to the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical well-being of all transgendered people. We address these concerns through regional retreats and other gatherings at our guest house, and this newsletter. Submissions to this newsletter are always welcome. Send hard copy to: Kindred Spirits, c/o 395 Lakey Gap Acres, Black Mountain, NC 28711-9558. Any issues to which you have contributed will be free of charge. A year's subscription to *gender quest* (4 issues) costs \$8. Make check or money order payable to: Kindred Spirits.

### Tranny Breakdown

by Callan Williams

Pull off the highway in Knoxville  
Man with a limp says  
look what a mess  
weve got here.  
\$1,954  
to fix my car  
tranny breakdown

Burnt out climbing the mountain  
limping along  
ready to break down  
ready to break though  
but maybe not yet  
No safe space for  
tranny breakdown

As a kid  
I hated to upchuck  
to let it all out  
to lose control  
to get yelled at by my mother  
who never held my head.  
I learned how to keep it down  
swallow it back  
use youthful energy to ensure  
there never was a  
tranny breakdown

In younger days  
girls were impressed by  
pedal to the floor  
big metal phallus  
leaping at the green light  
Even then I knew  
my stick shift never had  
quite that response.  
It loved to be caressed  
needed to be nurtured  
shifting smoothly  
without the bursts of T power.  
Signals for sure of  
tranny breakdown

Running ragged  
feel the slip  
when someone else  
sits next to you  
afraid she notices  
up the hill in the dark  
afraid that she can sense  
tranny breakdown

Shift into neutral  
cruise down the hill.  
Such stress on the tranny  
when jammed into drive  
to overcome the forces of nature.  
Pulling you to  
the base level.  
Pulling you to  
tranny breakdown

But every tranny gets old  
linkages get loose  
molecular bonds break down  
bills come due  
abuse takes its toll  
nature takes its course  
on the road to  
tranny breakdown

You can feel it coming  
the shifting gets soft  
the determined drive of younger days  
becomes a bit idiosyncratic.  
You become tender with your foot  
start to nurse it though  
all the while worrying about  
tranny breakdown

Feel the balk at the slope  
slip and slide  
buck and ride  
telling you clearly  
this is an impossible task  
telling you it's time for  
tranny breakdown

Grinding gears  
not quite meshing  
Wasting inner power  
Burning it off in friction  
Losing it all in heat  
Mechanical inefficiency.  
Leading inevitably to  
tranny breakdown

The released energy  
shuddering movements  
shivering fits  
wailing moans  
screaming out  
tranny slip  
mark the need for  
tranny breakdown

Be a man, my son  
replace that tranny yourself  
slide under the wagon  
bolt the torqueflite to  
the 318 V8.  
Covered with tranny fluid  
glistening cherry syrup  
puddled at my feet  
amniotic oil  
to seal in  
tranny breakdown

Smell the auto parts store  
rubber and chemicals  
adjust your shorts  
lope down the aisles  
searching for magic potions  
to prevent  
tranny breakdown.

Keep the grease rag wet  
A quart of Marvel Mystery Oil  
stops tranny leakage.  
Keep the filter clean  
with regular maintenance  
unless you want to crash  
unless you need let loose.  
Fill her up and  
never have to worry about  
tranny breakdown

Avoid facing the mechanic  
who gives you the chemicals  
does the re-manufacturing  
technological solutions  
allowing new power connections.  
Never the same as  
original equipment.  
A Turbohydromatic  
in a chassis designed for  
a Powerglide  
Check under the hood  
makeshift power train  
just asking for  
tranny breakdown

Tension comes over you  
when you know it's busted.  
Neck tightens up.  
Traffic jams are terror.  
So many people around  
What if it fails now?  
To be at the mercy  
of emergency trucks  
at the hands of strangers  
and you are in the middle of a  
tranny breakdown

Don't stop moving  
things might seize up.  
Keep it going.  
Taking it apart will  
just reveal the problem,  
forcing you to deal with it,  
forcing everyone to deal with it.  
Bringing out the reality of  
tranny breakdown

Cars are required  
Gender is required  
for status  
for movement  
for playing a part in society.  
Car breaks down  
Gender breaks down  
Identity breaks down.  
Dependent on others  
who look down on you  
tranny breakdown

I have never depended on  
the kindness of others  
for my independence.

*continued on last page*

## Kindred Spirits: the experience

by Christina Comeau

*"Language can only guide us to the opening that marks the beginning. The journey lies beyond. These few words describe some of beginnings that we experienced at Kindred Spirits 98 and perhaps they will guide our journey beyond our Spirit Circles."*

### Winding roads.

A spiral of expectations, known and unknown.  
Leaving the red dust of the city behind,  
replacing it with the welcome grit of the earth.  
An old home full of the treasures and  
the presence of many other journeying spirits.  
A loud dog, laid back cats.  
Friendly, hard working hosts,  
a sense of connectedness with the land.

Greeting, gathering,  
first circle, old circle,  
joining together.

Creation of sacred space,  
linking of minds and souls.

Strange beds, welcoming after a day's quest.  
New roommates, old friends.  
Easing out of worn-out city shoes.  
Being bare-foot,  
bare-bodied, bare-souled...amongst our own.

Morning prayers, of the east... and of the west.  
The aroma of a kitchen destined to fill  
all the culinary spaces that you reserve for  
delight.  
Good conversation, heated debate,  
breaking down barriers.  
Feeling the pull of the Earth,  
in your calves, and in your thighs.

Shedding  
clothes,  
the world,  
inhibitions,  
armor.

Bathing, cleansing,  
the power of water to heal,  
the force of nature pounding.  
Chilly mountain streams, in the afternoon shade,  
steaming hot springs capped by a starry night.

Hot mid day sun,  
Medicine Wheel,  
Celtic cross,  
The dignity of silence.  
Swallows circling wind swept bubbles,  
just having fun.

Hanging out, not alone.



Paddling a canoe,  
for a friend.  
Healing breath, shamanic journey.  
Everyday quest in this world  
and beyond.

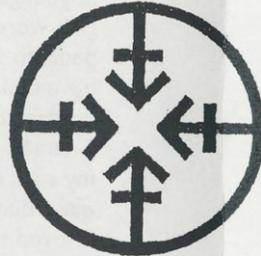
Zen  
Breakthrough,  
Seed,  
Playfulness.

Laughing, learning, teaching,  
sharing, sharing, sharing.  
Drums beating, drums silent, in vigil.

Ritual of the heart, crystal magic,  
abandoning the form of others,  
awakening to spontaneity.

Long talks, porch swings.  
Morning and nighttime flowers.  
Wildflowers, blossoming, each of us.

Countless acts of love and caring,  
Kindred Spirits.



## The New Transgender Shaman

By Jean Marie Zirger

The return drive to Arkansas provided ample opportunity to muse over the events of our Circle. After allowing the expected dose of post-event melancholy to dissipate, my mind began to select components that would give form and substance to the memory of a remarkable three-day adventure.

The structure and solidarity of our group was evident, but something nagged at me, arguing the case of a mission unfulfilled. How could this be? I had personally looked into the eyes of some incredibly beautiful human beings. They were authentic. They were charged with energy not unlike my own. And I felt as though for the first time in several years that I was coming from a position of power and strength. Surely we had contributed well in our effort to work magic.

Taking my position on the port side gunwale of a war canoe, I welcomed the odyssey of an animal spirit quest. My confidence in Marc's imagery, in Yvonne's integrity and enthusiasm, and the strength of the paddlers was secure. I paddled with impunity to any threats by encroaching or despoiling spirits. We were a crew possessed, a vessel on a holy mission to effect the healing of a fallen comrade. Spirit of the East wafted a propelling breeze across our backs, and from spirit of the West, a following sea. Spirit of the North gave us a sacred theatre of operation and spirit of the South provided us the impertinence to challenge the apparent folly of such a venture. As I watched in awe, our Shaman interred the spirit of the healing animal in the chest and crown of our wounded sister. An ancient rite performed in the ritual manner of our ancestors. Surely we, as transgender shamans, are uniquely endowed to learn, practice, and pass on this sacred and essential role in an ailing culture.

I have begun to feel confident in my own solitary rituals. I had rehearsed my invocation to the four directions and to the Goddess, Cybele and the God, Attis. I had collected the earth and water, made special by our frolic in its presence, and had placed the stones around the perimeter of our circle. It was time to work magic again, but this time it was I who must lead. Athame in hand, I mustered all the psychic energy I could find and successfully enveloped us in a sphere of protection... then I just went blank! Oh you beautiful, loving and patient friends. You deftly overlooked my missteps and mistakes. You lovingly ignored the unspoken and mis-



spoken words and looked into my soul and found the essence of the magical rite of the circle of stones. Is it our transgender that provides this level of loving acceptance, forgiveness and understanding?

Circling, spiral dancing, drumming, bathing, hiking, feasting and resting... bringing us closer to being in the ONE, and giving us the experience to bring others to this place of peace and security. These are the activities of uninhibited, open-minded spirits that have already been traveling the divergent paths of being human. We are the courageous few that have blazed our own trail into authenticity.

But what was it that nagged to be assured of the success of our Circle? Dismissing the quandry, I tuned the radio to a talk show, and heard a commentator use the phrase, "It's the same song but different words." Dear Goddess, that's it! While we modern transgender shamans must replay healing songs of the ancient ones, our challenge is to update words and symbols. The task seems monumental as we witness despoiled forest, putrid waterways, and a stifling atmosphere. But is it as difficult as leading a clan through a disease epidemic, not knowing the description of the microbes that caused it? I sense that we may actually be on a level playing field with the corrupters of our lands and our people in spite of their bulldozers and bigotry. What we produced in three days of loving companionship is testimony to the power of the Shamanic healing spirit song. Now let us find the new words and take that song to our people. Blessed be my sisters and brothers.

*(Jean Marie is going through some very tough times right now, every bit as a shamanic gender pioneer, and we invite your prayers toward her well being.)*

## The Spirit of Transgender

by Holly Boswell

(This is the second installment of a two-part series.)

### Balance Lost

With the advent of the Bronze Age about 5,000 years ago, wave upon wave of nomadic Kurgan (Asian) warriors on horseback began displacing the peaceful agrarian 30,000 year-old Goddess cultures throughout Europe and the Mediterranean. Whereas, "the central religious image (had been) a woman giving birth and not, as in our time, a man dying on a cross", Riane Eisler explains, "in this new reality that is now said to be the sole creation of a male God, the life-giving and nurturing (qualities have) been displaced by the power to dominate and destroy".

The old values, the old balance was upset, and the old pattern of partnership and equality succumbed to the system of domination and hierarchy. This creates suffering for all, as Starhawk notes: *The oppression of men in Father God-ruled patriarchy is perhaps less obvious but no less tragic than that of women. Men are encouraged to identify with a model no human being can successfully emulate: to be mini-rulers of narrow universes. They are internally split, into a "spiritual" self that is supposed to conquer their baser animal and emotional natures. They are at war with themselves: in the West, to "conquer" sin; in the East, to "conquer" desire or ego. Few escape from these wars undamaged. Men lose touch with their feelings and their bodies...*

Since Goddess culture has persisted "underground" these last five millennia, manifestations of Transgender Spirit must be viewed to some extent in relation to patriarchal oppression. Thus, what may appear at times to be negatively charged may be perfectly justifiable as a reaction.

The repression and persecution of transgendered people during this period has taken many forms, and is undeniably linked with the subjugation of women and the values of Goddess. A persistent and well-documented Biblical agenda has been to "cut down the groves" (sites of pagan worship) and to "establish dominion over Nature". Medieval Europe was infamous for burning witches, who were often Wiccan. Joan d'Arc was burned for dressing and acting as a man. When European explorers like DeSoto came to the Americas, they discovered transgendered shamans and, naming them *berdache* (boy prostitute), fed them to their dogs.

Within this climate of repression, gender-variant people claimed other ways of expressing their truth. In defiance of patriarchy, many found ritual self-castration (e.g. rites of Cybele and Attis) as a way back to Goddess in Transgender Spirit. Yet in subjugation, many also (such as the Hijras of India) have practiced prostitution and begging. The traditional caste systems of India and variations elsewhere may accommodate protective cloisters, but have failed to promote active integration of gender diversity within their culture.

To this day, the existence of transgendered people is despised, denied and trivialized. Transsexual Sandy Stone writes: *...one of the ways that people justify oppressing people of any alternative gender or sexuality is by saying that the social norm is natural. In other words it comes from God, an authority to which there is no appeal. All this is, in fact, a complete fabrication, a construction. There is no "natural" sex, because "sex" itself as a medical or cultural category is nothing more than the momentary outcome of battles over who owns the meanings of the category. There is a great deal wider variation in genetics than most people except geneticists realize, but we make that invisible through language...by having no words for*

*anything except male or female. One of the ways our culture erases people is by not having any words for them. That does it absolutely. When there's nothing to describe you, you are effectively invisible.*

TV talk shows and the mass media have done much to exploit and trivialize transgendered people and our spirit. And while crossdressers like Ru Paul or Lady Bunny of Wigstock, plus films like "Priscilla Queen of the Desert" or "To Wong Foo..." are currently in vogue, there is a backlash building within ultra-conservative factions of society.

Might this backlash be like a dinosaur flailing its tail in its death throes? Or will there be a critical mass of new consciousness and a paradigm shift? There is increasing evidence that the patriarchy is in decline, and that a renewal of spirituality is emerging. There are many bridges out of traditional space being formed by writers like Matthew Fox, Patricia Reilly and Paul Smith. There are many other examples of Spirit reasserting itself, not the least of which is the so-called New Age movement. Themes of feminism, consensus, ecology and spirituality are recreating the balance. Our need to evolve beckons from this threshold.

As the pendulum swings, Goddess is returning. Many masculine-to-feminine transgendered people share this momentum and are committing their lives to personifying the struggle. Many feminine-to-masculine transgendered people are also striving to bring the best of womanhood into a new sense of what it is to be a man. This long-forbidden cross-pollination of gender has the potential to enable all of us to become more fully human. So, just as women are reclaiming their connection with the divine, transgendered people are reconnecting with our own rich spiritual heritage and reclaiming sacred space.

### Transgender Spirits are Circling

Transgendered people in the West started gathering only 3-4 decades ago. Initially, issues of gender, sexuality and fetish were confused due to cultural context. But support groups formed and, in the early 1980's, international networks and conventions formed across the landscape. Many topics have since been addressed, including the recent introduction of Transgender Spirituality. This became most pronounced in 1991 when Rena Swifthawk shared her Native American Spirituality at I.F.G.E.'s convention in Denver, and transgender spirits circled months later at the first Southern Comfort Conference in Atlanta. Circles have continued at both these annual events and are catching on elsewhere like Fantasia Fair at Cape Cod -- the oldest of transgender festivals.

The first intentional Transgender Spirit Circle, following 3 years of national networking, was the Kindred Spirits Circle in Hot Springs, NC in August of 1993. True to spirit, many others have since convened: Pink Moon Gathering, Full Circle of Women, Union of Spirits, Mountain Spirits, and no doubt others which were less publicized. There is currently a retreat center taking shape in the mountains of Western North Carolina to address such issues year-round, called Kindred Spirits.

Transgender Spirits Circling within the Transgender Community is a rather recent and still controversial phenomenon. Many transgendered people practice traditional religions or have yet to find a spiritual life. But the longing for true community is universal. As Starhawk so beautifully expressed: *We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been.. a place, half-remembered and half-envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community. Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will*

*light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Somewhere where we can be free.*

Our circles to date are rather modest in scope, yet they are proliferating. They are intimate and affordable, and intense in their ability to heal and empower. The sharing and nurturing that is possible between kindred transgender spirits is unlike any other. It is characterized by intuitive connection, trust, honoring individuality, operating in consensus, spontaneity, minimal expectations, open hearts and minds, and no hidden agendas. While various therapeutic methods, shamanic techniques and any number of spiritual traditions can be utilized, the main feature of the process actually seems to be simply getting out of the way so that Spirit can move through. Traditional approaches can lend a foundation and validity, but we must also self-authorize by acting intuitively. As Goddess would say "all acts of love and pleasure are my rituals".

### Spirit Transcending Gender

The Transgender Spirit transcends the simplistic cultural dictum that anatomical sex is synonymous with gender expression. Gender should never be polarized. It is a rainbow that is far too splendid in its diversity. The expression of one's whole gender must be intuitive, fluid, and in a perpetual state of becoming. There can be no rules to govern how Spirit must manifest. Widespread occurrences of hermaphroditism in plants, animals and humans provide graphic evidence of Spirit expressing its diversity beyond the cultural constructs of bipolar gender. Transgendered people embody this Goddess-spirit of diversity integrated as one, whole being. The inner healing, which means "to make whole", that we achieve can be outwardly applied to the imbalance and distress that surrounds us. We can serve as a bridge between polarities to help restore balance, integration and wholeness.

Some Native American elders believe that there is an abundance of transgendered people being born at this time who can help heal our world. Gender is at the very heart of who we are as human beings. Our gender transitions -- the very process of gender-shift -- can be viewed as a kind of Vision Quest, addressing that age-old question: who are we? To transcend

gender stereotyping is to dare to be fully oneself, fully human, as Spirit intended. We must all cultivate our full capacities if we are to effectively meet the critical challenges of our time. But before we can help heal our world, we must heal ourselves. We must tell our truth, refashion old myths, and reinvent the tools we need to operate in today's world with deep compassion and fresh relevance.

I used to see my spiritual path as being very ascetic, having been taught that the sensuality and "frivolity" of my transgender was contrary to Spirit. All I thought I needed was a blanket and a bowl of water on a mountaintop. However, as I heeded the irresistible call of my transgender, I was delighted and surprised to discover that it provided the very "grounding" I needed. As Goddess came alive through me, I became more whole. Spirit and flesh, heaven and earth, became one. My lifelong experience in wilderness and love of Nature provided the foundation for this healing. I had wasted years waiting to feel worthy of the inscrutable wisdom of esoteric teachings, until I realized who my teachers really were, and that I was as ready as I would ever be to act from my own awareness. The challenge is to respect ourselves as caring and capable people. Increasingly, transgendered people are awakening and intuitively finding our own voices and callings, despite the prior deprivation of our history, or a community which might have empowered us sooner.

Once Spirit and Flesh are consciously joined, there is grounding, there is exaltation... there is balance. Once the need to polarize and separate relents, barriers fall away and fear gives way to love. As Starhawk says, *All begin in love; all seek to return to love. Love is the law, the teacher of wisdom, and the great revealer of mysteries.*

To transgress the arbitrary boundaries of gender is to honor the potential of Spirit. In the *Tao te Ching*, Lao Tzu wrote: *One who has a man's wings and a woman's also Is in himself a womb of the world And, being a womb of the world, Continuously, endlessly, gives birth....*

*We are deities. We are Spirit manifesting in human forms. Let us live that truth, and help everyone see the beauty and strength that lies beyond the constraints of gender. And let us give thanks for the unique opportunity to do so.*



## *Transcending Gender, continued*

Our present culture teaches us that we manifest in physical bodies as one of two primary sexes. We, as a society, further created the notion of only two genders linked to this defined biology based on the configuration of matter between the legs called our sex. Ambiguous genitalia occur much more frequently than we are led to believe. Also, recent research tells us that there are more than two combinations of chromosomes. Hundreds of thousands of people are born with various chromosomal combinations and therefore have various hormonal levels. There is no hard and fast biological description to legally divide men and women.

Also under consideration is the inner self, the energy within that cannot be touched or seen by the eye of the material world. This part wants to express its being in many ways: through dance, carpentry, communication, teaching, a vast array of modes. The expression of the inner does not automatically follow suit or match up in some divisional way with the biological outer self. Contrary to the culture's toolbox thinking, there are no perfect matchups. "Oh, you have this biology so surely you must feel and express yourself in this way."

We must also realize that our sexual attractions may have nothing to do with our biology. Without conditioned thinking, people would simply find their own energy vibration attracted to another vibration and that would be the ultimate criteria for coupling. The exterior body form, the inte-

rior self, and the expression of the sexual drive and preference, are individual parts of the whole that require liberation in order to move fluidly in this new reality.

The following quote is from Vimala Thaker, an Indian and a student of J. Krishnamurti's work. She is an author and teacher of the inner revolution of awakening.

*"In the heterosexual relationship woman receives and man asserts. This cannot change, this biological factor in the sex life that leaves its imprint on the psychology. The residue of sexual relationship builds up the male psychology and the female psychology, unless one educates oneself in transcending the sex consciousness and the "I" consciousness, the ego, which go together... there is a kind of assertiveness and domination without being conscious of it. It's in the blood. So we have to go beyond the biological and the psychological facts, and only then will living the nonduality that is the substance of Truth become possible."*

I invite you to notice how often you use the words male and female, man and woman. Each time you use those words you are feeding the concept of duality. As long as there is a binary, there will always be one up and one down, causing separation and certainly, unnecessarily, limiting everyone's human potential. If a Persian poet in the 14th century was "hip" to this, is it not time, and are we not overdue, for gender fluidity?

*"Healing means healing culture first, then people, and finally sickness." – Holger Kalweit*

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## *Tranny Breakdown, continued*

Don't tell them I need help  
Don't ask for their indulgence  
Don't be seen as a taker  
But I have to trust them  
to go into  
tranny breakdown

Pull into the garage,  
just let us see it.  
We can talk you though it  
We can patch you up.  
We can keep you rolling.  
Or maybe not.  
If I can't crash  
where can I blow up?  
Where is it safe  
to have a  
tranny breakdown?

Stuck in the birth canal again  
ready to deliver  
into the world  
a bouncing baby girl  
who has been hiding for so long  
she has grown to an eighth of a ton  
false labor again  
or time for breakout  
time for inevitable  
tranny breakdown?

Why do things by halves?  
It's only the impossible worth attempting  
Be big or be gone  
unless you avoid  
unless you embrace  
tranny breakdown

Time and time again  
on the edge  
transition  
transformation  
tranny breakdown  
no thanks  
Filthy fluid  
clotted with waste  
clogging the screens  
wearing the synchros  
can't process the load.  
Too much danger  
of crashing into static objects,  
of hurting people you love.  
Even blasting the radio  
doesn't cover the signs.  
No more room for denial of  
tranny breakdown

Millions of  
busted trannys  
consigned to the scrap heap  
along with their treasures.

Thrown out.  
sent to the margins  
pushed to the edge  
result of  
tranny breakdown

Pay the piper  
lay the groundwork  
face the music  
shut up and dance  
the inevitable occurs  
the dreaded happens  
the impossible is expected  
and you will be blamed for  
tranny breakdown

Be ashamed of not holding it together  
Be ashamed of not keeping it hidden  
Be ashamed of not buying the newest  
Be ashamed of letting people down  
Be ashamed of putting others at risk  
at least the risk of losing  
their comfortable illusions  
because of your own  
tranny breakdown

Pull of the highway in Knoxville  
a man with a limp says  
look at the mess  
we've got here.  
tranny breakdown