

*Energies of Transformation:
Practicing with the Power of the Divine
Feminine*

*Some Notes on Bhuvaneshwari and Two
Additional Contemplation Practices*

Week Two: November 17-24, 2010

Below you'll find

A) Some ways to think about Bhuvaneshwari, "She who Holds the Cosmos in Her Embrace," and

B) Some contemplations for deepening your experience of the Goddess as divine spaciousness.

Please do each of the contemplations at least once during the week. I would recommend doing the first one a couple of times, or more if you have time.

Set aside half an hour for each of the two practices, turn off the phone, and make sure you have paper and pen handy, so that you can journal about it, and record whatever you need to record.

*Bhuvaneshwari as Cosmic Space and the Power
to Hold Contradictions*

Bhuvaneshwari represents cosmic spaciousness, the matrix out of which all things manifest. In that sense, she is the field of possibility, the creative potential that always exists within consciousness. So tuning into her energy is a way of tuning into creative possibility itself. When we ask questions in meditation,

or ask for help in resolving an issue in life, or practice 'manifesting', it is the Bhuvaneshwari energy in consciousness that creates these mysterious creative shifts.

In terms of life practice, I like to consider Bhuvaneshwari as the divine spaciousness within which contradictions and difficulties can be resolved. As the space that holds all forms, she is also the power within consciousness that can effortlessly dissolve knots, and return your mind and heart to the state of peace.

Bhuvaneshwari is pure Beingness, the Beingness that underlies our world and our doings. In one sense, our suffering comes from the constant drive to do, to fix things, to create success for ourselves. In invoking Bhuvaneshwari, we open to the Being that contains all doings, and which has the power both to bring things to fruition and to resolve our contradictions. To practice with Bhuvaneshwari is to give ourselves the space to allow surrender and acceptance, surrender to reality as it is, surrender to our own inability to control outcomes.

Bhuvaneshwari represents that power that grants peace through acceptance, yet, which can also resolve in unexpected and seemingly miraculous ways the situations and conflicts that seem irresolvable by the ordinary mind. She is the space we reach in meditation, where creative solutions arise spontaneously, and external dilemmas are resolved by the power of Being itself.

She is also the Great Heart, the compassionate love within which our divine humanity, in all its complexity, can be held and transformed, and within which we realize that we are, really, a part of all that is. The love of the Great Heart is not emotional, but neither does it feel abstract or impersonal. It is a palpable sense of being held, embraced and seen. The Bhuvaneshwari Shakti can open us to the felt experience that we are part of all that is – a sense that our perceived differences are simply appearances within the underlying Beingness that we share.

Iconography

Bhuvaneshwari's iconography is much like Lalita's. But because the symbology of these forms is so protean, many of the aspects of her figure have different meanings in her case:

- Like Lalita, Bhuvaneshwari is the color of the rising sun, her color symbolizing her warmth and her innately blissful qualities. It reveals that spaciousness is not cold, but filled with tenderness.
- The moon in her hair symbolizes the fact that she is the mistress of change – like the moon as we see it from earth, waxing and waning in an endless cycle of creation, growth and dissolution.
- Two of her four hands are in the gestures that signify the giving of boons, and the dispersal of fear.
- Her noose symbolizes control of the senses. Her goad is the instinct towards dharma, right life and action. It is often experienced as the goad or inner guidance that we call conscience, the innate recognition of the right course of action.
- She sits on a throne, indicating her position as the queen or mistress of the cosmos. Like space, she presides over the entire cosmos, as the witnessing eye within everything that exists, and as the creative matrix out of which the worlds arise.
- One leg is crossed in half-lotus. The other is uncrossed, and touches the ground. This symbolizes her power of immediate creative activity. As the creative consciousness, she is at ease, yet spontaneous action can arise from her at a moment's notice.

Exercise I

Contemplating Bhuvaneshwari

You might like to begin by gazing for a few minutes at her picture (downloadable from the Course area on the website). Notice the majestic, queenly, and serene qualities of her form.

Then, close your eyes and seat yourself in a meditation posture. Practice the following meditation. (You may also practice the meditation without looking at the picture.)

Imagine Bhuvaneshwari as a luminous presence, standing or seated in the sky in front of you. You may envision her image, or imagine her presence as a golden-pink light, infinitely wise and peaceful. She is the peace of pure Being, out of which all spiritual realizations can emerge. She is the infinite sky, infinite space – but also the space within the heart.

Feel that her eyes are gazing upon you. In fact, her gaze comes not only from her form, but also from every corner of the sky. Allow yourself to be fully seen, as if her gaze looks into every corner of your being. Realize that in that gaze is complete acceptance of you as you are. You may not accept certain qualities and feelings, or certain life circumstances. The divine gaze of Bhuvaneshwari fully accepts them and you, in all your divine humanness.

If there is anything within you that you feel, *in this moment*, as unacceptable, offer it into her gaze. Ask yourself, “Can I allow this quality, or this situation, to be accepted? Can I allow my entire self, as I am, to be accepted?”

Now, be aware that her gaze invites you to feel your sense of self expand. From her heart comes a clear, transparent light. As it flows into your body, you feel your body becoming transparent,

becoming pure space. With the exhalation, you breathe that sense of inner spaciousness out into the atmosphere. Allow your sense of self to expand outward, filling up and containing the room you are in, the building, the landscape. As you breathe in the light of Bhuvaneshwari, see how wide your consciousness can become. Let yourself breathe in spaciousness, clarity, transparent luminosity, breathe it through your body, and allow that spaciousness to expand as wide as possible. You're letting your sense of self expand. You might feel as though the forms of your world are contained within your spacious consciousness. You might play with feeling that the world itself, and the people in it, are contained within your consciousness. As you do, keep yourself identified with the spaciousness itself, rather than with the people or places or feelings that you allow yourself to include.

At the end, bring your full awareness back into the heart, and have the sense that you inhale Bhuvaneshwari into your heart in the form of vast peace. For the next few minutes, see if you can feel yourself as majestic, spacious, utterly peaceful – as Bhuvaneshwari, she who holds the worlds. Sense how that presence can hold you and your emotions, your physical sensations, your desires, your fears, the others in your life and in your world. Notice the sensations and feelings within you during this contemplation.

At the end of this contemplation, have the sense that Bhuvaneshwari becomes a spacious presence in your heart, accessible both as the witness of your life, and as the wideness of inclusive compassion.

Offer salutations both to the atmosphere around you, and to your own heart.

Exercise II

Alternate Contemplation of Bhuvaneshwari as the Great Heart

Sense your own heart energy through the meditation practice we have been doing.

Feel your way into the back of the heart, and sense an opening there. Let your attention flow out the back body, and have the sense that you are moving into, and held in the Great Heart, which stretches behind your body and holds you on all sides.

Sense how the Great Heart is both within you and around you, holding your body in 360-degree awareness. Feel the largeness and spaciousness of the Great Heart. Feel its vastness, and also the quality of pulsing tenderness within it.

Rest there. If there is something that disturbs you, whether an internal feeling of grief or fear or anger, or something related to the external world, see if you can hold that feeling in the Great Heart. Let the Great Heart dissolve it.

Exercise III

Contemplation on Acceptance and Letting Go

(Some of you may feel that you already practice acceptance. Certainly you know its value. But for most of us, this self-inquiry will be revelatory. It is simple, but it can unpick many of the tendrils that hold your suffering in place.)

(Set aside at least half an hour for this exercise. Light a candle, and keep a paper and pencil handy.)

1) Write down a list of things you find unacceptable in your life-situation. Examples of external situations might be: A critical or difficult boss or co-worker. Not enough money. Not feeling loved by your husband or wife. Not having enough privacy, or feeling too alone. Frustration or lack of success in your career.

Recognize that the feeling of something being unacceptable may be present even if you intellectually accept it as ‘just the way things are.’ It will certainly be present if you feel that you are resigned to it. (That is, if you feel resigned to an unacceptable situation or inner feeling.)

2) Choose one situation to work with. Notice the felt sense that arises when you consider this situation.

1) Then ask yourself, ‘What makes this situation unacceptable to me?’ Notice and list the expectations you may have about how things should be.

2) Write down what you come up with.

3) Get in touch with the emotion(s) associated with your experience of this situation. If it is anger, where do you feel the anger? If fear, where do you feel the fear? See if you can find where it is in your body.

4) Now, ask yourself, “For this moment, can I allow this feeling to be here? Can I accept this feeling about my situation?” If the answer is ‘Yes,’ go on to 6).

5) If the answer that comes up is ‘No’ then ask yourself, “Can I accept my resistance to this feeling?” Then, ask, “Can I let go of my resistance to it?”

6) Now, ask yourself, “Can

I let go of the feeling about my situation as I am currently experiencing it in my body and mind?” If the answer is yes, ask yourself, “Can I do it now?”

9) Now ask yourself, “Can I, just for now, accept this situation in my life? Can I let go of my resistance to it?”

10) Notice the felt sense that arises as you tune into this question.

11) Ask yourself, ‘Can I accept this situation right now?’ Feel the way your mind and body feel as you tune into the felt sense of acceptance.

Part II

This is the mystical part.

12) Ask the Bhuvaneshwari energy to be present as pure grace-full spaciousness. Sense her presence around you, within and around you, as the Great Heart, that envelops and holds your body and mind.

Offer the situation to divine spaciousness. Deliberately have the thought: “I surrender this situation into the Great Heart, the spacious energy of Bhuvaneshwari, the transformative heart of consciousness itself. Please resolve this situation, inwardly and outwardly, in a way that brings the highest good and the highest peace.”

As you surrender it, feel that you have let it go. Then, get up and for the next half hour or so, do activities or tasks that don't engage your intellect – walking, washing dishes, gardening, straightening drawers, and playing with your pet or your child. In that way, you allow the energetic shift to ‘settle’.

You may notice a shift in your energy around the situation immediately. It may be subtle or apparent. You may also notice an external shift.

You can do this process with any situation or inner trait.