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### Introduction to the Great Goddess in India and Tibet

Welcome to an exploration of the Great Goddess as she lived, and still lives, in India and Tibet. In this region, she is still very much alive, and with the spread of Tibetan Buddhism to the West forced by the Chinese Communist invasion of Tibet 40 years ago, the religion of this Great Goddess has actively spread to the West. Although the Great Goddess can be found in one other literature, Celtic mythology written down during the Middle Ages, the wealth of texts and living cult practice is unparalleled in India and Tibet.

The complexity that appears is almost overwhelming. A serious academic controversy continues as to whether or not a single Great Goddess exists/existed in South and Central Asia; the number of apparently distinct goddesses, both 'major' and 'minor' that can be tabulated is striking. I proceed from the assumption that the Great Goddess was/is a global phenomenon, although it is easy to lose the 'single pre-eminent deity' when looking at her numerous epiphanies and manifestations. I sympathize with those who cannot see the unity behind the apparent 'ten thousand things'. In any case, this presentation lacks a single skeleton upon which to hang the discussion. The complexity of these mytho-poetics will not allow for that and no overriding theme will be forced on this study. Let us revel in the complexity for its own sake and for the extraordinary diversity of human behavior that is accepted under its umbrella. Hinduism and Buddhism are, perhaps, the most tolerant religions yet to appear on this planet. They are an extraordinary achievement of the human mind. Indian and Tibetan mytho-poetics have long impressed scholars with their complex, multilayered metaphors. In all of history, they may represent the most impressive cultural achievement in this realm for these societies valued intellectual pursuits very, very highly. Ultimate 'knowledge' was experiential, forever beyond intellectual study and accomplishment. Nonetheless, the development of a first rate intellectual mind and the commitment to in-depth, difficult study was always viewed as the essential beginning steps on the road to enlightenment. Such a view is rarely held in the West, where we have such a passion for what is quick, ego-centered, emotional and expressive. We do not have a deep cultural commitment to that which requires a major commitment to deep information gathering and tight, logical philosophy. Integration of such experiences into a life requires, above all, maturity of thought and discipline and the ability to make serious choices for the long-run gain. In our adolescent, ego-oriented culture forever obsessed with only today, we spin out accolades for those coming to meet us from Hindu or Buddhist realms. However, we rarely understand them because their message cannot be reduced to cartoon level, easily assimilated, self-help cleverness, however

much we try to do just that.

The other barrier in confronting these mytho-poetics is sex, something all Westerners are convinced they know a great deal about. As a culture, we are entirely unfamiliar with sexual practice integrated into religion. Within the context of Judao-Christian thought, such ideas were never acceptable to the mainstream and early in the history of both religions were branded heresy and totally sinful, to be persecuted wherever found. The mainstream theology of the West has been puritanical and moralistic since the early Middle Ages. Nonetheless, for several centuries, Gnosticism contained sects which practiced sexual rites within the context of a philosophy that drew heavily upon the New Testament. These Gnostic sects are discussed at some length in the beginning of this study in order to introduce rituals that were practiced in the West that bear some relationship to the integration of sexual rites within the Goddess cults of both Hindus and Buddhism. These practices are spectacular and extreme and their description will challenge many of your basic assumptions about public and private ethics and morality.

I have chosen not to avoid these issues, because without them a study of the Great Goddess in India and Tibet would have no meaning. Sexual rites, tantric and otherwise, were central to much cult practice because of the Goddess' intimate association with fertility and life-giving in both the human sphere and the ecological environment at large. (The historical record of sexual ritual in the West has yet to be explored fully and discussed thoughtfully.) The historical record in South and Central Asia is clear, from both written evidence and first hand observation. This is not to say all Goddess ritual was sexual, far from it. More than half of this study is concerned with other matters as the table of contents makes clear. However, when we enter the realm of the Goddess as Giver of Sovereignty and Tantrism, sexual ritual appears in a context loaded with complex metaphysical philosophy.

My commitment is, above all, to historical reality. What was, or is, must be witnessed and understood. Understand, that I am a researcher only, not a closet cultist who practices strange rituals, sexual or otherwise. In presenting this material, I am not advocating that myself or anyone should, necessarily, experiment with such practices. Context is everything and by that I mean traditions with deep mytho-poetic meaning that support daily life, secular and ritualistic. The cultural context for these practices, except for some Tantric rites, is forever gone and cannot be recreated. In any case, they were only intended for royalty under special circumstances as explained in the text, or for those of unusual psychological strength who were naturally inclined and thoroughly prepared to explore psychic realms that for most people were very dangerous and carried with them the possibility of madness. The potential benefits to the few who entered these realms are discussed in the study. The potential benefits to simply reading about this facet of religious history is that we might broaden our understanding

of human nature and see a more complete, complex picture than before. If such an exploration is offensive to you, please do not undertake it. No benefits will accrue; there would be no point in simply getting angry at me or feely morally superior. I strongly recommend that this material not be read by young people, who will not have the maturity or educational background to properly consider it, or anyone simply after sexual titilation. In either case, the time spent would simply be wasted.

The Great Goddess in India and Tibet  
Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
The Goddess and Tantra.....	9
The Goddess and the Horse Sacrifice.....	17
Evolution of the Indo-European Mare Ritual.....	22
Of Snakes, Venom and Milk.....	22
The Taming of the Goddess in India.....	23
The Domsday Mare: Indian Society as a Fusion of Two Mytho- Poetics, the Neolithic Great Goddess and Indo- European.....	25
God and Goddess: Sky and Earth.....	33
The Still Living Indian Goddess: Tantra.....	34
Denial and Acceptance.....	36
Gaia and Sovereignty: Sri Lakshmi .....	38
Indo-European Neolithic Goddess Balance: Ménage a Trois.....	46
Creativity, Complexity and Chaos.....	47
The Radha Goddess, Smallpox and Mythic Reality .....	48
Tara: The White and Green Great Goddess in Tibet.....	52
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	67

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attractive and a definite visual enhancement to this package. The WPWIN package contains three map files\* not included in the Dos text package because they are in .wpg format. They are a political map of India (indiapol.wpg); a topographical map of India (indiatop.wpg); and a topographical map of Central Asia (tibettop.wpg). If any of these files are missing contact RS immediately and we will send you, free of charge, the missing file(s).

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