

PEACEWALK THROUGH THE FEMALE/MOTHER AND DAUGHTER BEAR CONSTELLATIONS: BEARINGS OF LOVE AND INDOMITABILITY FOR OUR MATERNAL HUMANITY

**Editor's note: This paper was presented on October 24, 2009 at the conference, A (M)otherworld is Possible: Three Feminist Visions: The Motherhood Movement, Matriarchal Studies and The Gift Economy. Embedded conference of the 13th Annual Conference of the Association for Research on Mothering (ARM). Mothering and the Environment: The Natural, The Social, and The Built October 22-25, 2009, York University, Toronto, Canada*

It was the last lecture and presentation that Kalli Rose gave in her lifetime.

I'm offering a star journey in the direction of the female bears, since they are inseparable from my understanding of modern matriarchal studies, the feminist gift economy network, and the motherhood movement. First, you'll get your ticket, then we'll Visit the Library, Commune with Female Bear on Earth, Invoke Goddess as Bear, Swim amidst the Mother and Daughter Bear constellations, and come back home.

Your ticket: On one level, we in this room, but we're also stargazing during a dark New Moon, when stars are brightest, when inner eyes and ears are sharpest. We clearly sense that celestial upper world presences—like planets, stars, constellations—are inseparable from the world around us on Earth, including plants and animals. In turn, the worlds above and around are also inseparable from an underworld held deep within. The patterns of these three worlds—above, around, within—interrelate in time, in a kind of gift economy. Its language seems to say: "Attune to your birthright: harmonic intimacy with what is above, around, within you. Listen, transmit, and share." We're sharing our stories about animals on Earth, in the sky, and within, and it's my turn.

Visiting the Library: When I started reading about the two female bear constellations, I found interesting titles and stories, but to me, they were usually andocentric, or male-centered, and imperial. For example, I found a single male bear. I found male political and spiritual leaders, like the Emperor of China, King Arthur and his Round Table, Indian rishis, or seers. I found guiding principles, like wisdom, perfect government, reason, safety. I found tools of survival, like the farmer's plough or team of oxen, merchant's wagon, soldier's chariot, warrior's treasure sword. I found a tragic sense of death, like a coffin, funeral cortege, or group of mourners.

I also found an ocean of superlatives about the supreme status of these two constellations. Here's a sampling from Richard Allen: "...always the best known of the stellar groups, appearing in every extended reference to the heavens in the legends, parchments, tablets, and stones of remotest times, widely judged as the greatest of all sources of celestial power... have generated more titles and myths than any other stars."

So, it seems as though these two constellations of supreme status and power were usually seen as a single male bear, male leaders, their guiding principles and tools of survival, and tragic death. Boring to me, but typical: the stellar and planetary codes that I've inherited as a western and Vedic astrologer are usually pretty well-colonized by patriarchal consciousness. As above, so below. so, for my own health and sanity, I liberate the astrological imaginary, take back the sky as an ancestor of the future, and name the upper world in accordance with my own feminist and matriarchal lights.

Fortunately, I gleaned from a few library lines that in a tradition already extremely ancient in Homer's time, these constellations were two bears, almost always female, as in their Latin names Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, Great Female and Little Female Bear. This tradition extended from Babylonia and the Ganges through Eurasia, northern circumpolar cultures, and the Great Lakes—virtually the whole northern hemisphere.

This literary scent put me on the track of female bears in the sky, on Earth, and within. Perhaps in return, the bears have given me a great gift: a left paw of Indomitability. I already had an outstretched right paw of Love. But with these Five Claws, I can Growl out my Clauses about taking back the sky. And this left paw leads as I prowl—shambling, loping, leaping, soaring and swimming—to take action.

So, leading with this left paw, let's start from female-centered scratch in our approach to the two female bear constellations. What would female-centered bear themes be? Well, how do these constellations look and move? It looks like Great Female Bear is tracking the mirroring yet miniature stars of Little Female Bear - must be her Daughter - and like the Daughter is spinning around herself. Any other female-centered bear themes? Well, what do female bears do that males bears don't? Pregnancy and birth - child bearing? Maternal care-taking - Bearing with your cubs?

Our fresh approach to Ursa Major and Ursa Minor asks what female bears on Earth have to do with a Mother bear spinning around her Daughter, and a Daughter spinning around herself; with female leaders and their guiding principles; with female tools or tasks of survival; with a female rapport with death; with child Bearing; and maternal care taking, or Bearing with your cubs. I sense that my Five Claws have scraped into something; it seems that long ago, and even to this day, female bears on Earth gave people many Bearings along these lines. Still, I can't Prowl any further on my own.

Maybe I could ask female bear on Earth for help. Surely, only her power could open up the portal to her stars. So I sent out a Moon plea: *Female bear on Earth, I need to understand more about you in the gift economy of the three worlds, your circulation above, around, and within, long ago and right now. Bear with my ignorance about who you really are. I want to share a little of your story. Shamble, lope, leap, soar and swim alongside me, and even within me.*

Communing with Female Bear on Earth: Black female bear stands forth from her tribes. The many-colored coats of her extended family---brown, gray, bluish-gray, blue, reddish-yellow, cinnamon-colored, yellow, cream, blond, white—are like the many-colored skins of my human family. Bears and humans do resemble one another: large, long lived mammals with similar skeletons, walking flat on paws or feet, relying heavily upon five-clawed front paws or hands, and upon our highly willful natures.

But my intimacy with black female bear is intense. She's my sister, because in the wild, we occupy the same ecological niche, or nest. We eat the same proportions of the same foods, and we like to live in caves, so we can be rivals for food and shelter. As siblings, we cooperate in times of abundance, but compete in times of scarcity.

Of course, she and I weren't always sisters. I emerged only recently in Africa, where we humans found food and shelter without any bearish rivalry in the 'hood. In effect, we are the bears of Africa. Meanwhile, black female bear had emerged and differentiated in Europe maybe 1.5 million years earlier than us. Brown bears, grizzlies, polar bears and many bears now extinct

were at home on the plains, forests, mountains, tundra, and polar caps of Eurasia, Asia, North America, and the Arctic. So when we migrated north out of Africa, bears were everywhere.

Our intimacy is also intense because she's so smart. Her intelligence is not so inferior to my own in terms of observation, reasoning and memory. Our mutual food supplies in the wild fluctuate according to the seasons, weather, and climate, and to survive, we both have to think hard and learn easily. Our non-instinctual, opportunistic intelligence must continually discover, experiment, evaluate, adapt.

Black female bear, now that we've been introduced, did you and other female bears give humans any Bearings with respect to female leaders, their guiding principles, and tools or tasks of survival; to child bearing; maternal care-taking; the female rapport with death; or a Mother who spins around her Daughter, and a Daughter who spins around herself?

Let's start with death: Great Queen, you were my greatest threat in times of scarcity. Pound for pound, you ate about ten times more than I. You're larger, stronger, faster, it's easy for you to kill me, and tough for me to escape, much less to kill you, at least without a repeating rifle. Yet perhaps you modeled a spirited approach to inevitable death. You seem to die in hibernation—surviving off body fat, making water, recycling wastes—yet you emerge in the spring, perhaps embodying resurrection. If you emerge with cubs, you embody new life emerging from apparent death. Also, during hibernation, you must respond instantly to infantile cries, so rather than sleep, you enter a restful altered state, like a yogini in meditation. Perhaps you embody meditation; meditation is said to prepare us for death. How about child bearing? You enter hibernation alone, your flat belly not looking pregnant, yet months later, you emerge with cubs. Perhaps you embody apparent parthenogenesis. Also, you get pregnant only if you have ample resources, since your fertilized eggs don't even implant if you aren't nice and fat. Perhaps you embody birth control. Also, you take time, maybe 3 years, to educate your cubs, so you embody slow breeding. These all sound like guiding principles of female leaders to me; how about a few more? You patiently offer the maternal gift economy of education, not as some sort of luxury, but as a matter of life and death, of species continuity. You know how to defend freedom: if anyone tries to take the upper paw with you or your cubs, they meet up with your implacable temper. You embody indomitability.

How about maternal care-taking? Feeding, educating, protecting your cubs from predators, you also shelter them in birth dens and caves, where we also lived and buried our dead. Perhaps you embody the safety of resting places, be they caves, graves, or teddy bear cribs and beds. How about tools and tasks of survival? Your superpowers of sight, smell, and hearing quickly detect foods that humans need. Perhaps, relying upon your vastly superior senses, we copied your moves, profiting from your expertise in gathering and hunting. Perhaps you embody survival itself: without your leadership, we may not even have survived in the north. Finally, how about a Mother spinning around her Daughter, and a Daughter spinning around herself? Mother and Daughter physically mirror one another; the Mother embodies relationship, the Daughter, autonomy. Perhaps the form and movement of your constellations embodied *the supreme status of partnership, or the two-in-one nature of reality*.

Female bears on Earth, perhaps some of these gifts help to explain why so many northern ancestors saw you in these constellations. Regardless of the past, I see these gifts in your stars today, and offer seven prayers, acknowledging your leadership: *May we humans achieve reproductive freedom, seeing you naturally control birth. May we teach the art of being a human as a matter of life and death, seeing you assiduously teach the art of being a bear. May we end slaveries, seeing you indomitably defend yourself and your cubs from would-be dominators.*

May we end hunger and homelessness, seeing you feed and shelter yourself and your cubs. May we end racism, seeing so many coats of color peacefully coexisting in your extended family. May we live sustainably, seeing you consume responsibly, conserve energy, create water and recycle waste. And may we directly satisfy your needs now by restoring forests and ice caps, seeing that you are Barely surviving, and remembering that bears and humans are ecological siblings: if we cannot protect you, how can we protect ourselves and our young?

It's time to leap from Earth and soar toward the stars, but first, we'll honor female bear in the celestial upper world.

Invoking Goddess as Bear: I'll invoke Artemis by growling a few clauses associated with her name, derived from the Greek "Arktos" and "Themis:" *Hail Artemis! Female bear... north... Ursa Major... Ursa Minor... ancient polar Goddess... the immutable center... the gate of birth and death... the ruler of the circle, the whole movement of the sky, and destiny..., the guardian of the pole and cosmic order... female lover of all animals, including their powers and habitats... the spirit of the tribe or city..., the basis of democracy and right rule... the collective conscience that creates religion.*

We're leaping from Earth and beginning to soar toward the stars, but having invoked Artemis in terms of "right rule" and "collective conscience," my stomach turns, my paws shake. For Earth below spins backwards and forwards in time, revealing four mutually-reinforcing economic wars. The war on girls and women, female slavery in sexual, reproductive, domestic, maternal, caretaking, emotional terms. The war on colonized peoples, slavery in terms of life, labor, goods, traditions, resources. The war of rape-culture capitalism, with its invasions, conquests, dominations, thefts, exploitations, genocides. The war on nature, with so many plants, animals, and habitats Barely surviving. On all these warfronts, as much is taken, and as little is given back as possible, in the exact opposite of the gift economy, the maternal and parenting economy. *Artemis, give me strength: patriarchal economy is unbearable.*

Meanwhile, the upper world seems saturated with the imbalance or an exclusively-male deity, albeit one with a merciful and gracious side, and generous and compassionate followers. Nevertheless, so many of his clergy and imperial leaders have justified and legitimized these economic wars for millennia, whether through church-and-state alliances, or other traditions, customs, laws, and forms of education. *Artemis, give me strength: patriarchal religion is unbearable.*

However, as I sense those on Earth who have always resisted these imbalances, my stomach settles, my paws steady. Big bear hugs to everyone who has ever responded by speaking out, healing and empowering. Bears of Africa, loving and indomitable, perhaps taking Pauses out of exhaustion, but never giving up. How they Growl and Prowl today—perhaps more successfully than ever before—to restore the old paths of balance, or to invent new paths. How they encourage female and maternal agency, and girl power. And how the grace of Goddess is removing the curses laid upon her, through the unfolding dharmas of her devotees. Jai Maa!

We now swim amidst the stars of Great Female and Mother Bear and her Daughter. Since these are the only two constellations that tightly resemble one another, we're in a magic mirror. These two swirl together every day in a circle, seeming to create a three dimensional spiral, or helix.

Swimming in the Mother and Daughter Bear Constellations: Great Female and Mother Bear gigantically stands forth. Her hundreds of visible stars and over four dozen visible galaxies have

given the northern hemisphere its Bearings for millennia in terms of time, season, latitude. Of her seven brightest stars, four trace the cave-boundaries of her womb. Three stars trace the path of her vulva and vagina, her female and maternal cave-opening of sexuality and birth. Her four paws point south towards zodiacal constellations: the pregnant Crab, the Lioness giving birth. Always tracking her child, her two brightest womb stars point to her daughter's vulva star.

Daughter Bear is a miniature version of her mom, so four bright stars mark her womb, and three stars mark the path of her vulva and vagina, her cave-opening of sexuality and reproductive promise. Each day, her body firmly spins around her vulva star. Daughter Bear seems to twirl around her own root chakra, a portrait of autonomy, self-sufficiency, independence, sovereignty, and poised control. The apparently fixed, motionless, immovable light of her vulva star, also known as the North Star, guides us north, and forms the stillpoint around which all other northern stars spin. To me, daughter Bear's vulva star embodies a reproductive promise of immortality.

I Bear tidings of great joy, since in around 2102 (twenty-one hundred two), 93 years from now, Earth's polar axis—the imaginary line connecting the North and South Pole—will point exactly toward the Daughter's vulva star. It's taken almost 26,000 years for Earth's southern and northern hemispheres to align with the Daughter's vulva star. What could this precise alignment between Earth and the Daughter's vulva star suggest? Well, considering that on Earth, vulvae, vaginas, and wombs of daughters are still widely deemed shameful or dangerous, mutilated, incested, raped, controlled and sold, whether by family members, lovers or spouses, pimps or sex-slave traders, clergy or state... to me, in this long-awaited alignment, it is written: imminent and exponential progress in ending the sexual and reproductive slavery of our daughters is inevitable. To me, a more matriarchal world is evolving, in the sense that daughters will increasingly control their highly respected and protected powers of sexuality and fertility. With a dignified root chakra, a daughter can enjoy life more, and more easily act to manifest her dreams and heal injustice. Happily, this alignment is already well underway: even heads of state, CEOs, international banks, and philanthropic leaders now agree with what feminists have been teaching for decades: the greatest single force for global change is the girl revolution.

Before returning to Earth, I—like innumerable astrologers before me—will be so bold as to conjure these two supreme constellations to protect, inspire, and perform miracles. *Ursa Major Ursa Minor* support our female and maternal agency and activism. *Ursa Major Ursa Minor* support the demise of our female and maternal slaveries, especially the sexual and reproductive slavery of daughters. *Ursa Major Ursa Minor* support our female-identified economic leaders, their guiding principles, their tools and tasks of survival. For instance, along what Jensine Larsen calls the new silk road of female economic leadership, “hot commodities are no longer textiles and spices—they are the shared values of caregiving, healthy ecosystems, spiritual well-being, community, and beauty.” *Ursa Major Ursa Minor* support our female-identified religious leaders, for instance, those who counter the abuses and persecutions of patriarchal religion, or those who attune to a two-in-one, tantric nature of reality. *Ursa Major Ursa Minor*, support the cleansing of our planet, steeped in the pollution of rapist capitalism. *Ursa Major Ursa Minor*, support the healing of life-threatening illnesses thereby caused in plants, animals, humans, and all of our habitats. *Ursa Major Ursa Minor*, support our understanding of pure giving as the healthy heart of economic order. *Ursa Major Ursa Minor*, support our understanding of motherhood as exemplary and quintessential, as the most important function within a society, the wisest foundation for economy and religion, and the prime inspiration for maternal humanity. *Ursa Major Ursa Minor* I conjure you now, as the greatest source of celestial power, support our efforts to Bear the (M)Otherworld to Earth.

We must soar down, leap to Earth, lope to Canada, and shamble to our Toronto gathering. With my Paws flat-footed on this terrain, I recall that for many in North America, *Ursa Major Ursa Minor* are known as the Big and Little Dippers. American slaves could only drink from dippers or gourds, but they transformed the dipper or gourd, a symbol of oppression, into a beacon of bearish indomitability while fleeing racist slavery on the Underground Railroad to Canada. Risking death for freedom, they followed the stars of the “Big Dipper” or the “Drinking Gourd.”

Thanks and farewell: Thank you, and farewell, female bears on Earth, Artemis, and *Ursa Major Ursa Minor* You made this Peacewalk possible by gifting me with Five Claws. Thanks to Heide Göttner-Abendroth of Modern Matriarchal Studies and Genevieve Vaughan of the Int’l Feminist Gift Economy Network for bringing us together. Thanks to Andrea O’Reilly, Renée Knapp and the members of ARM—the Association of Research on Mothering—for embracing our (M)Otherworld gathering. Most of all, thank you for stepping out on this star journey. I wonder, do the joyful and tearful spirits of Many Bears shamble, lope, leap, soar and swim alongside, or even within you? For we are the sons and daughters, ancestral and intergalactic. We begin at the iron crystal at Earth’s core. We extend through the celestial sphere, the deep space that has no circumference. We have balanced knowledge inside of us. Join me, as I release any memory of being punished for this power. For the secrets of nature and nurture are our secrets, now spoken aloud. We must now be loud, and run naked with our truths. Namaste.