Kali Ma - Ode to a Dark Goddess

She seemed very nice
The neighbours said of the good wife
A sweet woman who ground spices
From morning till night
Cooked perfect rice, always polite
Discreet in a sari of neat silk pleats
Kissed babies, tended old ladies
Eyes down, modest,
No frown

But Kali Ma was always there
Just beneath the doe eyed stare
Her boiling rage and infinite love
Woven into the tightly braided crow black hair
Her battle cry screams and echoes
In the dark chambers of the swaddled heart
Swelling with lust and fury
Baying for the spilt blood of an unjust jury

Unable to sleep in the syrupy heat
The woman feels the stampede
Of an unamed beast
Thunder threatens to disembowel
The storm heavy sky
Far off, a jackal howls
The woman moves quickly into the night,
Silent on bare feet

By the river in fields of the newly dead
Are the blue ashes of the lover
They forbade her to wed
She mixes them with tears
and smears on them her naked breast and head
Unwinds the choking cloth from fevered skin
Her slow dance on the pyre begins
Enticing the dark Goddess from the void within
Kali Ma, fearless and feral
Rises up from time immemorial
Primordial mother
Ruthless lover
Relentless slayer of untruth
Defender and destroyer
Bearing a silver sickle and garland of skulls
Demanding all stagnant life be culled.

Kali Ma rocks the weeping woman
In a multi limbed embrace
Compassionate deity, tender and fierce
Hungry tongue lapping up
Tears from her child's face
Soothing unspeakable fears
Transcending time and years
She lays the sleeping woman
In the fragrant orchid
Spreads her hair upon a tiger skin
As a queen upon a throne
Blesses her with courage
For the journey into the unknown

In the brightness of a scorched day
The neighbours will gather round and say
I saw her with a lion
I saw her with a cat
I saw her burning alive upon the ghat
I saw her kill a man and
Rip out his throat
No silly
That was just a goat

But Kali Ma is always there
Patrolling the hinterland
And the murky waters
watching for outcasts,bandits
And forbidden daughters
Her love boundless
And unmeasured
Her thirst for life and death untethered
In the eye of a lioness
Or the demise of a star
Ask and she will whisper
She is right where you are