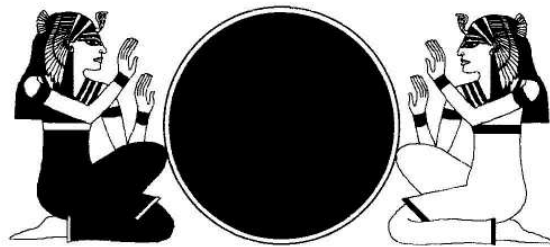


Temple of the Dark Moon



The Divine Feminine

© Frances Billinghamurst (first published in "Dejavu" February 2003)

As I write this article for the first edition of "Dejavu" magazine¹, the military might of the West have announced that it will only be a matter of time before war is waged against Iraq. Without getting into the political debate of this matter, I can still remember the ultimate disbelief and shock (not to mention an inner fear) I felt when the first Gulf war started in 1991. Some twelve years later, I find myself going through the same emotions, with an added sadness, for it does not seem that we, as a race, have not moved very far along our spiritual route at all.

Today, it is a rare occasion when the news reported does not include of act of war, injustice, violence, cruelty or degradation. While some spiritual traditions state that we are in an "enlightened" phase of human existence, I struggle to understand where this enlightenment is being actually being practised, for it does not seem to be influencing those we elect to represent us on a worldly scale.

In the last 2,000 years or so, we have been under the influence of a heavily Martian, masculine energy. In Taoist thought, this Yin energy needs to be balanced with the Yang, the feminine, and I personally feel that now, even more than before, this balance is necessary to save our race and the fragile planet on which we live.

¹ "Dejavu" magazine only existed for four publications

For me, like a growing number of other spiritual aware people, this feminine energy comes through in the form of the Goddess, the Divine Feminine. Although some people may think that the Goddess is merely some by-product of the feminist movement of the 1970s, in truth, the honour and worship of her goes way back to our distant ancestors. In nearly every ancient culture and civilisation, the earliest spiritual practices revolved around a direct attunement with the Goddess, the female life force.

The Goddess was perceived as the creatrix of all life and the source of perpetual renewal. She spoke to her people, our ancestors, through the annual seasons, as well as the cycles of the female body. All life was imbued with her divine and dynamic energy. Throughout the world, she was known by a thousand differing names, most of which are still with us today, in the form of mythology or ancient figurines.

The first evidence of the worship of the Goddess, or at least the female principle, dates back to Palaeolithic times (the Old Stone Age, around 25,000 to 15,000 BCE - before common era) where the figurines were found. These figurines are today often referred to as “Venus figures”, and often appeared with large pendulous breasts, ample hips and thighs, and with large stomachs as if indicating pregnancy and fertility.

The “Venus of Willendorf” (*image right*), named after a site in Austria where she was found, is probably one of the better known representations of the ancient Goddess. Made of limestone, this figurine appears to be a fertility Goddess with large swollen breasts (on which a pair of slim arms rest), stomach and thighs. Such figurines have led to the belief that our ancient ancestors saw the Goddess as the provider of life, as well as death, and that woman was an embodiment of the Goddess for she too could bring forth life.



In African caves, images of the Horned Goddess, who later became known as Isis, date around 7,000-6,000 BCE. In pre-dynastic Egypt, prior to 3,110 BCE, the Goddess was known as Ta-Urt (“Great One”) and was portrayed as a pregnant hippopotamus standing on hind legs. In Thebes, the following inscription was found, believed to have been written in the 14th century BCE:

"In the beginning there was Isis; the Oldest of the old. She was the Goddess from who all becoming arose. She was the Great Lady, Mistress of the two lands of Egypt, Mistress of Shelter, Mistress of Heaven, Mistress of the House of Life, Mistress of the word of God. She was unique. In all Her great and wonderful words, She was a wise magician and more excellent than any god."

In Robert Graves' translation of *The Golden Ass* by the Roman writer Apuleius of the 2nd century CE (Common Era), the Goddess herself appears and explains:

"I am nature, the Universal Mother, mistress of all elements, primordial child of time, sovereign of all things spiritual, Queen of the Dead, Queen also of the immortals, the single manifestation of all gods and goddesses that are. My nod governs the shining heights of Heaven, the wholesome sea breezes, the lamentable silences of the world below. Though I am worshipped in many aspects, known by countless names, and propitiated with all manner of different rites, yet the whole round earth venerates me.



"The Primeval Phrygians call me Pessinuntica, Mother of the Gods; the Athenians sprung from their own soil, call me Cecropian Artemis; for the islanders of Cyprus I am Paphian Aphrodite, for the archers of Crete I am Dictynna, for the tri-lingual Sicilians, Stygian Prosperine; and for the Eleusinians their ancient Mother of Corn. Some know me as Juno, some as Bellona of the Battles; others as Hecate, others again as Rhamnubia, but both races of Aethiopians, whose lands the morning sun first shines upon, and the Egyptians who excel in ancient learning and worship me with ceremonies proper to my godhead, call me by my true name, namely Queen Isis."

In today's modern world, the Goddess, the Divine Feminine, can still be found. To the Hindus, she is Kali, the ancient mother of creation and destruction. In the Japanese Shinto religion, the chief Deity is the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu Omi Kami, whose simple shrines are noted for their architectural purity and unpretentiousness. Even in Christianity, the cult of the ancient Goddess can still be found in the form of Mary, who is still referred to by the ancient Goddess titles of "the Virgin" or the "Queen of Heaven" by the Catholic church. However, this Christian Goddess has been placed on a pedestal which is out of reach for the normal woman to truly identify with (rather like the supermodels of the fashion industry).

Reconnecting with the Goddess, the Divine Feminine, is vital today for the health of our race on all levels. It helps to heal the distrust and inequality between the sexes, as well as creating a better understanding to those religions and cultures which are different from our own. However, this knowledge must begin first with our own selves. We need to understand that, unlike the patriarchal Christian God, who is positioned somewhere up in the lofty heavenly heights, the Goddess is very much a part of us and the Earth on which we live. When we truly acknowledge and understand that aspect, we start to treat our own selves with a bit more respect, as well as the people around us and our own environment.

About the Author:

Frances first connected with the Divine Feminine in the late 1980s. This connection was strengthened in 1993 when during a Wiccan rite known as "Drawing Down the Moon" the great Egyptian Goddess Isis made her presence felt.

Since that time Frances has continued to strengthen her personal relationship with the Divine Feminine - the Ancient Matriarch - the Goddess. Now Frances is drawn to share her knowledge and experience with others in order to assist them to re-connect with this ancient, yet powerful force.

Since 2002 Frances has been regularly writing for Australia's No.1 spiritual lifestyle magazine, "Insight", and her articles have appeared in over 10 separate publications around the world, including "SageWoman" and the 2008 Llewellyn "Witches" calendar. She has also appeared in the "Sunday Mail", the "Messenger" and the "Melbourne Age".

For all enquiries, bookings and/or further information, please contact Frances on:
Web site: www.templedarkmoon.com
Email: darkmoon@ace.net.au