

Embracing the Goddess

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Thousands of years ago, before the dawn of written history, feminine energy was an important part of people's lives. Clans venerated wise mother Goddesses, dark destroyer Goddesses, and cyclical fertility Goddesses, of which women were the natural embodiment. But as politics evolved, these Goddesses were forgotten or relegated to positions as wives or concubines, and their energy was lost to time. But, as some people are discovering, contemporary people need the guidance of the Goddess more than ever. The Goddess movement seeks to recapture that energy and to bring civilisation back into touch with its history of feminine power.

Members of the Goddess movement believe that Goddess energy emanates from many aspects, which exist both as all-inclusive deities as well as individual Goddesses such as Isis, Inanna, Demeter and Kali. Throughout history the Goddess has taken on the role of mother, virgin, warrior, creator, destroyer, hunter, artist, lover, Wytch and healer. Goddess spirituality is diverse, incorporating both the loving and the terrible, the dark and the light, the Maiden and the Crone. It is because of this that it can be conservative or radical, feminist, celebratory, or simply the recognition for nature's purity.

The common factor, however, is the balance sought by the Goddess movement. The Goddess is an emblem of wisdom, creativity, and individual evolution. Her divine nurturing energy is alive, ever-changing, and the perfect counterpoint to the energy of the Divine Male. With it, we satisfy the need for strong female role models and expressions of female prowess to help us tap into our own feminine energy. Embracing the Goddess can take many forms, from building a personal meditation space or altar to the Goddess, to participating in Goddess festivals and group rituals, yet all are valid. It is never too late to begin a new tradition.

Many cultures throughout the world continue to honour the Goddess. Buddhism, Hinduism, Native American traditions, and African religions each pay homage to the Divine Feminine. But each seeker in the Goddess movement is encouraged to find their own personal Goddess, and to recapture the potent energy embodied by feminine spirituality in order to experience fit hand a greater personal fulfilment and to discover the Goddess within.

Sacred Feminine: Finding the Balance, Honouring the Feminine

The Goddess is the female Divine healing, the Mother, the Amazon, the healer, the lover and the Queen. To speak of the Sacred Feminine is to speak of the innate divine qualities of women throughout the ages. It harks back to all times when power manifests as a positive attribute, not associated with control or supremacy, but rather potential and strength and the earthly powers of Sun and Moon and nature.

Examples of suppression, even unintentional, of natural feminine instincts abound. Women can be ticketed for breast feeding in shopping malls. The fact that 28 days in the lunar calendar and 28 days in a woman's cycle is treated as hardly more than a coincidence. The rich and hugely interesting pantheon of female mythological characters and Deities is not practiced with great regularity.

But to a well tuned ear or eye, signs of the archetype of the Goddess are apparent and abundant. The concept of the Sacred Feminine entered mainstream consciousness with the best selling book "*The Da Vinci Code*". Pilgrimage tours to sacred sites for women featuring ancient ceremonies are gaining in popularity. Curiosity and a good library will unveil many intriguing tales and traditions from which to cull.

The Hopi Indians tell of Ha Hai-I Wuhti, the mother who nourishes all beings, be they kachinas, humans, sentient or insentient, placing a female at the centre of all creation. The Hindus have the great Mother Durga who, though beauty, transforms into her wrathful form. Quan Yin is the familiar Chinese Goddess of compassion. In Africa, the Orishas are honoured as both Gods and Goddesses.

All animals, humans included, are born from the union of male and female. Appreciating our feminine side in the spiritual sense means valuing the feminine principle, along with the masculine principle, as equal and fundamental aspects of the Divine. The yin yang symbol is a reminder of this perfect balance within us. And now is the perfect time to find that balance by honouring the feminine. Who are the women in your life? Pay attention to the contribution of women to our society. Lift the glass to them, sing their praises, honour them in whatever way, small or large. Paying this respect reaffirms our connection to the Divine, the Goddess, the Earth and each other.

Feminine Wisdom: Maiden, Mother and Crone

A woman's life is filled with stages, milestones ushering in wondrous experiential apexes like the coming of fertility, motherhood, and wisdom. Three aspects, Maiden, Mother and Crone, have traditionally represented the bounties and new beginnings represented by each stage. The Maiden is the aspect of new beginnings, youth, playfulness, spontaneity, and learning. A woman in the prime of her life can be said to be living under the aspect of the Mother, who personifies fertility, strength, and stability. She is the gentle nurturer as well as the fierce lioness. Lastly, and by far the most misunderstood and yet in many ways the most serving of reverence, is the Crone, who hold within her all the wisdom of the journeys of womanhood within her.

The word Crone once meant simple 'wise woman' and in antiquity, was a term of respect. The Crone was a voice of wisdom,

an elder, a healer, a counsellor, and a teacher, who had travelled the paths of Maiden and Mother, and possessed the accumulated wisdom of youth, adulthood, and old age. She represented the fulfilment of maturity and the knowledge that could only be obtained through a life well lived. The transition to Cronehood was a rich and empowering experience, and an important rite of passage, though not one associated with a specific age.

Today, though it seems eternal youth has become an obsession, women are reclaiming the status once associated with Cronehood by recognising their evolution and acting upon it. In awakening the Crone, as she once was, women are acknowledging the extraordinary wisdom, grace, dignity and beauty that comes with age.

In embracing the aspect of the Crone, it is important to be aware of the fact that age, experience, knowledge, and power are profound gifts that can never be taken from you. Each stage of life is yours and yours alone, and should be embraced as a vital part of life's journey. As you pass loving through each stage, coming finally to the remarkable Crone, you will gradually be awakened to the mysteries of each, until you hold within you the keys to them all.