

The Re-Emergence of the Divine Feminine and its Significance for Spiritual, Psychological and Evolutionary Growth

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WESTBROOK UNIVERSITY

**The Re-Emergence of the Divine Feminine and its Significance
for Spiritual, Psychological and Evolutionary Growth**

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
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BY
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To Mom – thanks for being an inspiration as an Aphrodite
Archetype and an Athena career woman.

Genesis was the beginning of the end for the goddess.

Dan Brown, *The DaVinci Code*

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Preface

I have always been very interested in Goddess archetypes and how they influence psychological, spiritual and even evolutionary growth. I have noticed a rise in their popularity in the past few decades. I had hoped at the outset of this program over four and ½ years ago that I could write a paper on Goddesses. Although I would never call myself a feminist, I definitely had some feminist leanings when I started research on this paper. I have since come to realize that it is not a contest, if the feminine side or the masculine wins, then no one wins. We must all join together to envision a new paradigm that honors both paths. This is important for the survival of our species and our planet. We cannot continue this path of destruction of nature and wars against ourselves. But also we cannot return to the idyllic Paleolithic times of the Goddess. We have grown consciously and now we must use all of our resources to insure not only our survival but also our success.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those individuals who supported me along the way. It has been four and ½ years since I started this program and I am happy that it is nearing its conclusion. I have had to escape many responsibilities in order to see this program come to fruition and I thank those who took up the slack for me.

I would also like to thank my friends from work, my support group, the “Goddesses” who took my tests and participated in my studies as subjects or interested parties. Thanks for all of your assistance and patience along the way.

Summary (Abstract)

For millennia a patriarchal society has ruled to the exclusion of the feminine or the Goddess who was peacefully worshipped before being completely replaced by a warrior Father God. The Goddess and hence women have been relegated to 2nd class citizens. The concept of woman as defined by traditional patriarchal society has disempowered the female sex and deemed them inferior. This exclusion and denigration of the divine feminine has done serious damage to women and men both individually and collectively, not to mention the damage this masculine mindset has caused to the environment through wars and other aggressive acts.

In this dissertation, the history of the Goddess from the Paleolithic to the present is discussed and causes for the rise of patriarchy, such as invasions by warrior cults, the advent of language and the development of the ego are explored. Then the re-emergence of the divine feminine and its psychological, spiritual and evolutionary effects are discussed.

This negative perception of the self by women is challenged by re-imagining women after the Greek Goddess archetypes: Athena, Hera, Demeter, Artemis, Aphrodite and Persephone. The Goddess archetypes are discussed in a therapeutical context as well as other therapeutical techniques such as aspecting, visualizations and women's' groups and circles. The author proposes the re-introduction of the "Sacred Marriage", a sacred ritual performed in temples since Neolithic times and in certain sects today, as a technique for therapy. This sexual ritual along with an understanding of the history of the divine feminine will have individual, collective and evolutionary effects.

The Re-Emergence of the Divine Feminine and its Significance for Spiritual, Psychological and Evolutionary Growth

INTRODUCTION

For the last 2,000 to 4,000 years God has been depicted as masculine in gender. This is due in part to the influence of the three major religions today – Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

For as long as 20,000 years prior to that, God was seen as feminine, Goddess. She reigned supreme and was known as Isis, Astarte, Ishtar, Cybele, Demeter, Artemis, Hera, Tara, Kali and Athena. She was a wise creator and was not only a fertility symbol but had wide-ranging societal influence on both men and women.

During her reign, women could buy and sell property, have businesses and inherit land and title from their mothers. Even in patriarchal Christianity, women can explore the lost glory of Lilith, Eve and Mary. With the advent of patriarchy, women were merely the property of their fathers and husbands, who held the power of life and death over them. Women were considered inherently sinful and were to be closely controlled. It has only been in the last few decades that the idea of a Divine Feminine is once again becoming popular and can be discussed openly without fear of reprisal, at least in most of the Western world. This movement will further be recognized as necessary for balance of the masculine and feminine, to bring the world back to order.

This re-emergence is significant for the spiritual, psychological and evolutionary growth of males and females. The resacralization of the feminine will allow males to

connect with their feminine side without losing their masculinity. Females can grow spiritually and psychologically with Goddess archetypes. They now have alternatives to becoming aggressive like men or staying home to have babies, as the patriarchal view would describe femininity. All of this can be accomplished without the loss of her femininity. Her power is rooted within her and these role models will bring alternatives to current paradigms.

Both males and females can grow as was meant. This direction will lead to a balance between the sexes that will allow for evolutionary growth as it was originally intended. The pendulum has swung both ways and can come to rest in the middle to create a new paradigm, a new consciousness.

This paper will explore Goddess religions around the world both ancient and current, starting in the Paleolithic Age, during the time that humans were hunter-gathers with the discovery of “Venus” figurines and through the Neolithic Age when agriculture was invented and humans gathered in villages with a Goddess temple at the center of their community. Next the Goddess was relegated to the lesser position as consort with the invasion of warrior tribes from the North during the Iron Age. Finally, patriarchy was in full swing with the rise of Judaism and its dislike of any “idols”, especially those of the Goddess.

Different theories will be presented as to how and why this shift from matriarchy to patriarchy occurred. Some theorists believe that it was the influence of Northern invaders, natural disasters or perhaps even the advent of the written language, which caused a shift in brain functioning.

A Jungian analysis of the Divine Feminine archetype or Great Mother will be presented. Lastly, feminist psychology as it applies to both male and female growth and how this growth is necessary for humans to reach the next level of evolutionary consciousness, as a species will be discussed. This new evolutionary consciousness or revolution will also be discussed.

A complete section on psychotherapeutic interventions will be presented and discussion will ensue as to how these interventions can bring about balance in men and women. These interventions include integrating different aspects of the Goddesses into your life so an analysis of several Goddesses and what they represent will be discussed. Integration can be accomplished through creative visualization, dreamwork, art therapy, psychodrama, women's circles and chanting Divine names. Also the author proposes the re-introduction of the "Sacred Marriage" as a therapeutic technique for growth.

A correlation between this paper and the empirical study that preceded it will be discussed. Conclusions of the thoughts presented in this paper and the future that can be brought about by the revolution of the Divine feminine will be discussed at the end of this paper.

DEFINITION OF THE GODDESS

What is the Goddess, the Divine Feminine, the Great Mother? She is the embodiment of the feminine principle, a mythological character, a psychological archetype necessary for growth and a religious figure. "The Mother Goddess, wherever she is found, is an image that inspires and focuses a perception of the universe as an organic, alive and sacred whole, in which humanity, the Earth and all life on Earth

participate as her children” (Baring & Cashford, 1993). The Goddess “...contains all opposites within herself, including male and female, creation and destruction. And she recognizes that life and death are of equal weight, held in balance to preserve the order of the universe” (Husain, 1997).

In the Gnostic Christian texts found in Nag Hamadi, Egypt in 1945 (Dead Sea Scrolls) is a section, which is believed to be the voice of Sophia (divine feminine wisdom) as she describes herself in a text called *Thunder, Perfect Mind*, (Kraemer, 2004):

For I am the first and the last.
I am the honored one and the scorned one.
I am the whore and the holy one.
I am the wife and the virgin.
I am the mother and the daughter.
I am the barren one and many are her sons.
I am she whose wedding is great,
and I have not taken a husband.
I am the midwife and she who does not bear.
I am the solace of my labor pains.
I am the bride and the bridegroom,
And it is my husband who begot me.
I am the mother of my father and the
Sister of my husband, and he is my offspring...
Give heed to me.
I am the one who is disgraced and the great one.

From a psychological standpoint the Goddess is an archetype that exists in the collective unconscious. She can be fragmented into lesser Goddesses, which each have particular needs and wants which exert influence over the individual (Bolen, 1984). The Great Mother is a symbolic image whose expression is found in the Goddess represented by myth and artistic creations (Neumann, 1974). A Goddess is a psychological description of a complex female character type that we intuitively recognize in ourselves, others and our culture (Woolger, 1989).

Spiritually, the worship of the Goddess included the celebration of major events in a woman's life that are not seen today. These celebrations included rituals for the onset of menstruation, childbirth and menopause (Reilly, 1995). The Goddess can bring sustenance to the transpersonal realm, to a life that is devoid of female models (Zweig, 1990). The Great Mother is immanent as opposed to the transcendent Father God (Harvey, 1995).

The Goddess was devoted to the irreverent female sexuality. Sex was seen as sacred and was vital to nature, not vulgar (Estes, 1995). The body was beautiful and nothing to be ashamed of or hidden, it was to be celebrated and enjoyed.

HISTORY OF THE GODDESS

In order to understand where humanity needs to go it is important to understand the history of the Goddess to see where humanity has been.

The Paleolithic Age Goddess appeared as early as 20,000 B.C. in the form of statues and cave drawings. These statues of the Goddess known as "Venus" figurines have been discovered from Spain to Siberia. These figures were carved in stone or bone and sometimes in ivory. They depict a round, large-breasted motherly figure. They are usually small and often pregnant.

During this time most of the glaciers that had covered Europe and Asia had melted and grasslands now appeared which supported herds of grazing animals. Homo sapiens also appeared on the scene and hunted these animals for food.

More than 130 of the Venus statues have been discovered at Paleolithic sites (Baring, 1993). Many of the statues had some sort of red pigment on them indicating a connection with blood and markings believed to connect them with a menstrual cycle and the moon cycles. Those tribes, who did not migrate with the herds, drew their Goddess figures on the cave walls where they lived.

No similar male figures have been found. It is believed that these are fertility Goddesses due to the exaggeration of the size of the breasts and stomach. Other theories of their purpose are that they are actual women, ancient pornography or teaching models to demonstrate the birth process to first time mothers. Marija Gimbutas suggested that they were “symbolic or mythic figures used to reenact seasonal and other myths” (Gimbutas, 1991).

Due to the statues’s role in rituals, they can be linked to the Goddess or her representative. But more than simple fertility Goddesses these statues conveyed the mystery of birth and the female body at that time period. Since these statues were discovered at different sites all over the two continents then this image of the Divine Feminine was a universal consciousness and not a localized ideal.

Evidence of rituals and burial sites can be found in caves. The cave symbolized the womb, where life is brought forth and where it is returned for rebirth after death. Most of these sacred sites have been found 1-2 miles inside these labyrinthine cave complexes. Wall drawings inside these caves depicted animals that represented different aspects of the Goddess and her form was usually painted at the entrance to the cave. What appears to be darts or stick and line forms flying at the animals were originally thought to be weapons for hunting (male symbols) by early archeologists – a

misconception furthered by academics raised in a patriarchal environment. Recently, microscopic analysis has proven that many of these are actually depictions of trees, plants, leaves and grass.

One of the early images of the Goddess was the moon. The female menstrual cycle coincided with the moon cycles and therefore became associated with the Goddess. The phases of the moon was also associated with the phases in the life of the Mother – the crescent moon or new moon was associated with a young girl or virgin, the full moon was the Mother or pregnant adult woman and the dark moon or new moon was the wise old woman or crone.

These phases demonstrated the cyclical nature of life, an endless pattern of growth death and rebirth. Darkness was not seen as the opposite of light but just another component of the Mother Goddess. Everything was a part of their relationship with her. This lunar mythology preceded solar mythology in most cultures. The Goddess was seen as the shining light in the darkness.

Many of the burial sites of the time revealed bodies were buried in the fetal position, facing East with red ochre dye sprinkled on them. This indicates a belief in the rebirth of the body after death. Some had carvings of a vulva in stone and placed in the grave, indicating the regenerative powers of the womb. Usually also were seen carvings of a snake which was associated with rebirth due to its annual shedding of skin. Another animal commonly associated with death is the bird, which was thought to guide the spirit after death.

These sacred traditions associate the powers of life and death with women and the miracle of birth incarnated in woman's body. At this time in history, the connection

between sex and childbirth 10 moons later was not understood. The female was revered as the giver of life; only the female could reproduce her own kind. Man's role as a hunter was to provide and protect the women who alone bore the responsibility of childbirth and child rearing. The evolutionary model perpetuated by the current male dominated society has colored the interpretations of these early archeological finds to be seen through the paradigm as man the hunter being dominant at the time.

Since only females could perpetuate the species, the society was matrilineal; kinship was traced through the mother as she was seen as the singular parent of her family. Possessions would be passed down to the next generation through the mother. Paternity could not be established.

During the Neolithic Age, about 10,000 B.C. to 5500 B.C., the cult of the Goddess grew and became more organized into a religion, which permeated all of society. During this age, humans learned to participate with nature instead of just reaping what was offered. The Neolithic Age is differentiated from the Paleolithic Age by the development of agriculture and the domestication of animals. Seeds could now be planted that grew into grains and were made into bread and domesticated animals provided milk eggs, meat and clothing. Humans also learned to weave cloth and make pots to store food. Tribes stopped being nomadic and settled in one community to build houses, temples and villages.

The image of the Goddess also grew and expanded to include not only birth, death and regeneration of humans, but plants and animals as well. With the knowledge of agriculture, the seasons became important. The cyclical pattern of nature was discernible

and so the 10 lunar month gestation of a child became even more sacred in the Neolithic. In the beginning only women made pots, clothes and played a central role in agriculture.

Statues of Goddesses continue to be made but now with more modern methods. There are striking similarities in the statues found all over Europe from this era for at this time in history there were no tribal Gods only a universally worshipped Goddess.

The advent of agriculture and the domestication of animals introduced a very prosperous time. Settlements grew into villages and towns that housed thousands of people. These settlements were usually near water, with fertile land and pastures for animals. These people seemed to enjoy peace and their arts prospered. None of these towns were fortified against attack as it did not seem necessary. It wasn't until about 4500 B.C. that the first wave of Indo-European invaders swept down out of the North.

Archeological evidence suggests that there was no superiority of females over males. The society was matrilineal and the distribution of goods was egalitarian. Women did play essential roles in religious rituals and temples. The statues of the Goddess have changed little in the Neolithic Age except for the medium utilized. They are now carved or made in clay, marble, bone and gold.

For a long time the Goddess embodied the male attributes as well as the female attributes. Around the 6th to 7th millennia B.C. figures of the God begin to differentiate from the Goddess. The male is now seen as the power that fertilizes and the female has the gestating womb. Initially the bull or some other phallic symbol depicted the God and sometimes the God was shown also as the son of the Goddess. Sometimes the God was depicted as the corn to be harvested or cut down annually and reborn again in the spring.

One of the earliest depictions of “sacred marriage” is seen in a statue of a man and woman in an embrace dated about 4500 B.C. The sacred marriage was a ritual between God and Goddess, which symbolized the fertility of humans, crops and animals. This ritual would be enacted annually by a priestess (embodiment of Goddess) and a selected male (which later in history became the King). In the beginning the male was sacrificed after the ritual and later it was purely symbolic.

One example of a Neolithic city is Catal Huyuk, Anatolia (now modern Turkey). It thrived from about 7000 to 5000 B.C. Catal Huyuk is the largest Neolithic site, occupying 32 acres and was discovered in 1957 by James Mellart. It was an advanced civilization that centered on a Mother Goddess. The city was built on a plain surrounded by trees, grassland and roaming herds of animals. They had stone carving, weaving, cloth dyeing, pottery, basketwork, spinning, cultivated crops and built houses and shrines. Also there are indications of the smelting of copper and lead.

In all drawings on walls, only the Goddess is depicted, the God was represented as a bull. In many locations the Goddess is seen as giving birth to several bulls. It appears that he was both the consort and the son of the Goddess, which will be seen, in later cultures. The Goddess is depicted in her three aspects – a young girl, a woman giving birth and an old woman.

There is no indication of warfare in Catal Huyuk. There was a division of labor between the sexes but no indication of superiority. Society was basically equalitarian with no distinctions between sex and class. In temple remains, females are shown preparing and conducting Goddess rituals. Baking bread, weaving and making pottery were also relegated to women.

Around 4500 B.C. this idyllic life was interrupted by the arrival of warlike tribes of Indo-Europeans or Aryans. These tribes were nomadic and came from the North and East. They are also called Kurgans or Barrow people. They worshipped sky Gods, carried weapons such as the battleaxe and dagger and rode horses that they had domesticated. These ruthless invaders imposed their own mythology and customs on the peaceful agriculturalists. Gimbutas believes that the Kurgans invaded Europe in three waves from 4300 to 2800 B.C. These invasions all but wiped out the previous culture or assimilated it into their own. The Kurgans social system was hierarchal and dominated by powerful males and a male priesthood. They practiced human (men, women and children) sacrifice and animal sacrifice.

Another example of a high Goddess civilization that existed into the historical era is Crete. Since Crete avoided being invaded longer than other Neolithic communities it evolved without disruption until about 1450 B.C. when the second and greater of two earthquakes abruptly ended most of its civilization. In Crete the Goddess is depicted as a flowing, dynamic energy that could manifest as a swarm of bees or coils of snakes. She is usually seen with her arms raised and either serpents coiling around her arms or holding the double axes.

Crete had a prosperous trade with other countries in the Mediterranean. They exported olive oil, honey, fish, fruit and herbs. Cretan palaces were spacious and usually several stories high. They had courtyards that were decorated with images of flowers and animal life. Attention was given to beauty and details. They had a high standard of living as it seems that even the peasants had comparable living spaces.

Sir Arthur Evans excavated the palace at Knossos, Crete in the beginning of the 20th century. He discovered five great palace complexes. Evans called the culture Minoan after the Homeric legends. Their cities were organized, they had harbor installations, networks of roads, drainage systems, sanitary installations and organized temples and burial grounds. Cretan towns were not fortified and violence was never depicted in all their artwork. Finally around 1100 B.C. they succumbed to dominion under the Achaeans, but the Goddess still survived there in a lesser form.

Goddess images were found everywhere with her child or consort. The beauty of Minoan women is seen in frescos. They all wore typical Minoan dress that was bare-breasted with a long skirt, just like the Goddess statues. Women participated in all areas of society and there seemed to be no domination by either sex. Women and men can be seen working together as partners in bull-vaulting, which appears to be some sort of sport performed in honor of the Goddess. In religious ceremonies, the priestess always presided.

In Cretan art the God was depicted as a bull, he was the son-lover of the Goddess. He personified growth and had to die annually in order to be reborn. He is the form of life that changes and she is the principle that is continually renewing itself. At one time the King was sacrificed annually to be replaced by the bull. The sacrificial tool utilized was the double axe, which the Goddess is seen carrying in her most common form. Before the bull was sacrificed, its magical power was invoked by the bull vaulting event. In bull vaulting, teams would take turns grasping the horns of the bull and somersaulting over its back.

It appears that Cretan wealth was primarily spent on living harmoniously. Their art reflects a society that was not based on dominance and oppression. They seem to have diverted their aggressiveness by a well-balanced sexual life. The women were bare-breasted and the men wore skimpy clothes that emphasized their genitals. In our society today, it seems that sex can be seen as more sinful than warfare.

At the beginning of the Bronze Age around 3500 B.C., women still maintained freedoms in Goddess city-states. In Sumer and Babylonia, women married more than one man. There was no penalty for women who participated in adultery and marriage had to be approved by mother and father. Women engaged in business activities of the temple, held real estate in their own names, lent money and conducted business. The earliest accounts of writing in 3200 B.C. were discovered in the temple of Inanna for land payment. The scribes were women. Seven of Hammurabi's laws concerned the priestesses of the temple and their rights to inherit and pass on to offspring. In this time period if a woman was raped by a man, he was put to death.

In the classical age of Sparta, where Artemis was worshipped, the women were free and independent. Young Spartan women could be found in the gymnasium, where they tossed off their restrictive clothes and wrestled naked with their male counterparts. They had total sexual freedom and were encouraged to get pregnant by the most handsome man they could find (Stone, 1976).

In the Bronze Age, 3500 to 1250 B.C. is seen the beginning of the decline of the Goddess. As stated before waves of Northern invaders swept across Europe and Asia from 4300 to 2800 B.C. These invaders gradually imposed their ways of life on those they conquered. They were referred to as Indo-Europeans, Aryans in India, Hittites in the

Fertile Crescent, Luwians in Anatolia, Kurgans in Europe and Achaeans in Greece (Eisler, 1988). There were other nomadic invaders as well; the most famous were a Semitic group called Hebrews who invaded Canaan. The one thing they all had in common was a dominator model of society, in which male dominance and violence was then norm. These nomads also used metal for weapons. These metals were previously used for jewelry, ritual and tools.

What differentiates the Bronze Age from others is the advent of writing. It appears at first on clay and strips of papyrus and then carved on temples and walls. Originally it was utilized to keep track of property and temple goods. Some theorists believe that the development of writing is what turned society from matriarchal to patriarchal. That will be discussed later in this paper.

Now stories and myths can be passed on through writing as opposed to oral traditions. Many of these stories were about the Goddess and her son-lover. The most common story is about the separation of the Goddess and her lover who appears to die and go to the underworld. This is also reflected in the seasons. The Goddess must then descend into the darkness to retrieve her loved one and bring him into the light. This can also be seen as a metaphor for change.

In Sumeria, the Goddess Inanna must go to the underworld and meet her sister Ereshkigal, who makes her submit to trials. When Inanna returns she sends her consort Dumuzi to take her place. In Babylonia the Goddess is called Ishtar and her son-lover is Tammuz. In Egypt she is Isis and her brother-lover is Osiris. In Canaan, it is the God Baal who must be retrieved by his sister Anath. In Greece it is the story of Persephone being kidnapped by Hades and finally returned her to her mother Demeter.

Towards the middle of the Bronze Age the Goddess seems to recede into the background as the father Gods take center stage. The new creation myths in which the God plays the major role now overshadow the old ones. In the new myths, heaven and earth are separated and the God orders from beyond instead of a Goddess who moves from within. The hero myth now becomes popular. It shifts the focus away from the Goddess.

Now the surviving Goddesses take on a new image, Goddess of war. Goddesses are now depicted as carrying weapons and leading armies into battle to conquer enemies. Goddesses are also depicted as bestowing power to the ruling king or the king is said to have been the son of the Goddess or incarnation of the God/son-lover.

Isis was one of the three great Goddesses of the Bronze Age; the others were Cybele of Anatolia and Inanna of Sumeria. Isis was the greatest and most popular of all Goddesses worshipped in Egypt. She was worshipped for over 3000 years (Baring, 1993). Her images passed to Mary around the 2ND century B.C. Her sphere of influence covered not only Egypt but Greece and Roman Empire.

She was known as the milk-giving cow Goddess, Goddess of serpents, star Goddess Sirius who brought about the annual flooding of the Nile, the fertile pig Goddess, bird Goddess, Goddess of the Underworld who gave the breath of life to the dead, Tree of Life, mother of Horus, Goddess of the throne upon whose lap the king sat. She was the Great Mother Goddess from whom all Gods and Goddesses were born but she was also born from the Earth and the Sky.

Isis is seen as a sympathetic Goddess due to her search for her husband/brother Osiris. The myth of Isis and Osiris begins with Osiris being first king of Egypt and Isis