

Embracing the Feminine Consciousness: *by Karen Tate* A Revolution of Thought *First printed online in The New Age Journal*

People turn to religion in times of chaos. No doubt when St. Paul was run out of Ephesus, lucky to be alive after he tried to turn the masses away from their beloved Goddess Artemis, he must have had his doubts if Christianity would ever stick. Likewise for St. Thomas in 72 CE when he saw an apparition of the Indian Goddess Kali in Calcutta, as he tried to convert the heathens. If you lived and worshiped in Pagan Rome, you probably never thought you would see the day the empire would be dominated by Christians. And if you were an early Christian, fearing for your life, you surely wondered what the future held. In the nineteenth century, it was debated if women had souls. The United States allowed slavery. Women fighting for the vote in America were threatened with institutionalization and arrest for their activism and desire for equality. And the thought of an African American or woman becoming President were unheard of.

One thing is certain - change is inevitable and it occurs when enough people will it, after a profound event, or when circumstances collide that usher in transitions or new beginnings. Some people say the concept of Goddess, whether that be a deity, archetype, or ideal for cultural and social change, is an idea whose time has come and gone. It is little more than a feminist fantasy and discredited spirituality. Millions would disagree and state mainstreaming Goddess Spirituality, or ideals of the Feminine Consciousness, spiritually, culturally, and politically, is an idea that is flowering and finding its way back within mainstream life across continents and cultures.

Why the Feminine Consciousness or Goddess Spirituality?

Goddess, by her many faces across continents and cultures is a role model for tolerance, inclusivity and diversity. She represents restoration of the sacred, oneness and life-affirming values. Whether deity, archetype, or ideal, the "feminine face of god" can become common ground - a broad and diverse umbrella under which many can gather and find safety from the storm of chaos. She makes no demands people worship no other god but her entitling select groups to feel they are the chosen people with the only keys to the kingdom - or with the right to convert the other heathens of the world. No fatwas, inquisitions, or crusades in the name of Goddess. No decimation of foreign cultures deemed "other." Nor does Goddess give humanity the right to dominate and exploit the natural resources of Earth, its people and creatures. Within Goddess Spirituality, we are stewards and caretakers of Earth and its many peoples, not the masters.



Benefits of embracing Goddess could have some of the aforementioned external effects, but let us not forget the more personal benefits. Women become empowered when they realize the face of the Divine is also feminine. Recognizing the divine within themselves, they are no longer satisfied being relegated to a rung on the spiritual, cultural and socio-economic ladder below men. They

learn they are not meant to take abuse or denigration. However, with that realization comes an added responsibility to step up into their female power and contribute on levels they might not have previously.

Men become whole as they embrace Goddess and in doing so, embrace the so-called feminine aspects within themselves. Perhaps they discover a new way of being, not just with women,

but within the world, as they learn the value of being motivated by cooperation rather than competition, greed and power-over strategies. Qualities once misrepresented as weaknesses are now more accurately viewed as strengths. Gender roles blur within Goddess Spirituality. Along with generations of education and activism, no longer will those with pointed sticks, bombs, and bullets rule the day.

Both genders begin to see the wisdom of complementing each other and recognize the need for balance, harmony, and equality between peoples and the sexes. Humiliation and subjugation of women in all its forms may become taboo rather than the norm. Only when the feminine is known and embraced can both men and women find equilibrium on both the inner and outer planes, and then take the next step toward morphing those ideals into society at large.

And as Goddess Spirituality is reconstructed for the contemporary world, people are doing what they have always done. They cherry-pick the best ideas, they re-interpret, re-define, re-think and re-claim. They assign new and relevant meaning for a contemporary context that moves a movement forward providing benchmarks for living. Goddess becomes the antithesis of many of the world's woes.

Why a Resurgence of the Creative Feminine Consciousness Now?

Here is a short list of why the times are ripe for a change.

For most of us, things have probably never been worse in our lifetime than they are now. People are disgusted and disillusioned with not only our political leaders, but our spiritual leaders as well.

At home and abroad, fundamentalists and extremists, no matter what religion they belong to, have humanity by the throat as these tyrants call for the death of people with different beliefs than theirs. Much of Europe is already much more secular in their thought, having given up on patriarchal religion. People are also tired of the scandals and hypocrisy associated with the Church.

In America, Naomi Wolf, author of *The End of America: A Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot*, convincingly cites the 10 steps a would-be dictator must take to destroy constitutional freedoms and argues the George W. Bush Administration seems to be taking them all. More people are being awakened to the lies, misdeeds, and callousness of “public servants,” the exploitation of people, workers and the environment, and our civil rights slipping. We are tired of dissent or questioning being deemed unpatriotic. Of having to apologize for our government and our country having a black eye on the world scene. And while unanswered questions hint at more scandal to come, we don’t get all the facts because the media outlets have shrunk from dozens to a handful, limiting free speech and public dialogue as our media becomes more stifled and impotent. Instead of unbiased reports, they feed us bread and circuses.

People are tired of religion or economics being used as an excuse for unwarranted repression, discrimination, war that funds the pockets of the rich, and the military industrial complex, with little regard for the spilled blood of the middle class and poor, many of whom volunteered to have a job or get an education. Fear tactics, power mongering, bullying, presidential tantrums and manipulation are becoming not just tiresome but repulsive. Patriarchal domination, capitalist fascism or oppression, disaster exploitation and looming environmental disaster have people craving change making the time ripe for a new way of thinking and being in the world. People want to have hope and the way things are going, the way things have been done, are more clearly being seen as the wrong way. Most people, unless they are part of the problem, and benefitting from the current state of affairs, are ready for a revolution of thought.

And we see the glimmers of awareness as the Feminine Consciousness lifts her veil.

The dogma of human-made patriarchal religion, professing the only valid truth is revering a monotheistic male God, has attempted to dethrone Goddess from her place as Creatrix of the world for thousands of years. People resisted then and now. They changed the names of Goddess to Mary, Mary Magdalene, Guadalupe, and Kwan Yin. They built grand cathedrals in her name. Many who were once blind are starting to see and remember the roots and true origins of the Divine Feminine. She is not a fantasy. Evidence of her lives in museums, art, textiles, parables, myths, and archaeological sites, if we just seek her out. She is the missing piece of the puzzle that can lend harmony and guidance to issues of power, war, and politics. She sheds light on the meaning of love, life, and death. She brings us a mother’s unconditional love and inspires us with hope. To many She embodies the laws of polarity, reciprocity, and attraction. Right action and justice are her credos.

Though change occurs slowly, after decades of work, Goddess is back in the psyches of many and the idea of the feminine face of god is blossoming. Once knowledge of Goddess might have been limited to discussion in college classrooms or among Academia. Few sources beyond Neo-Pagans suggested it as a viable spirituality in the West. Fortunately, this is no longer the case. No doubt the internet has helped open the floodgates and spread knowledge of Goddess and herstory.

Progressive politicians now publicly call upon the Goddess of Peace and acknowledging the importance of the Divine Feminine’s role in past cultures. To more people environmentalism and care of Mother Earth is as much a science as a religion.

Not long ago, scientists discovering a new star named it Sedna, after an Inuit Goddess, indigenous to the arctic waters of Newfoundland and Canada. Coincidentally or not, Sedna’s myths call for man’s wise use of natural resources lest they face destructive consequences. Women, inspired by Goddess, are mobilizing in innumerable grassroots efforts that will soon emerge as catalysts for positive change. In her *New York Times* bestselling novel, *The Secret Life of Bees*, Sue Monk Kidd tells the fictional story of a woman finding hope by embracing Goddess. *Bees* has sold four million copies, has been translated into 23 languages, and Hollywood plans to bring the book to the big screen. Look at the millions whose curiosity was piqued and the dialogue that was sparked by *The DaVinci Code* book and movie which challenged traditional beliefs in spite of the inaccuracies. People are asking questions and challenging the status quo and their programming as they realize we are victims of nuanced history. Activism is up and the masses are questioning the “truthiness,” to coin a phrase of Stephen Colbert, of current affairs. Christian writers are writing about the Feminine Face of God.

The most recent American Religious Identification Survey by the City University of New York found one the fastest-growing religions in the United States, when all the many hybrids and traditions are added together, have in common they embrace Goddess. Another sign of change is Wiccans have recently won an important victory when the American Department of Veterans Affairs settled a lawsuit and agreed to add the pentacle to a list of approved religious symbols it will engrave on veterans’ headstones. Events that attract millions, like Burning Man, display altars to various Goddesses. Opportunities such as the Pasadena, CA Temple of the Goddess being given the chance to participate in Charter Cable’s Faith On Demand program so that Goddess Spirituality might define itself to the mainstream public alongside traditional faiths is unprecedented. The Vatican calling a special conference to address the rising interest among people in alternative religions is significant. Goddess advocates are being invited to be a part of the inter-religious dialogue at the prestigious Parliament for World Religions. Internet radio shows provide a platform for voices that speak for the values and herstory of the Sacred Feminine.

Goddess has become part of popular culture and less often mis-interpreted as the one-dimensional female characters of Classical Greek mythology. The many varied aspects of the Sacred Feminine are being embraced everyday by more and more

people as their primary spirituality or as a complement to their existing beliefs, alongside the Divine Masculine. Some wonder if the Divine Couple was ever really divorced or if that separation might be blamed on early patriarchs in their grab for power and control of the people and the female gender. With the resurgent interest in Mary Magdalene, women of more traditional faiths are beginning to awaken to the hidden history of the Church, its repression of female leadership, the bridge to Goddess from Mary, and they are saying we are mad as heck and we aren't going to take it anymore!

What does a World with Goddess at the Center Look Like?

By association with Goddess as life-giver, women once may have held a higher standing within prehistoric societies. That idea would be restored. Women, the backbone of society along with children, will be at the center of society, rather than on the fringe where they are the most vulnerable as females will be recognized as created in the image of Divinity. Sexuality will no longer be seen as taboo. Gender roles might fade. Women would certainly be able to be leaders within their chosen religions as Goddess is restored to her throne alongside God. We have all heard the expression, "the meek will inherit the Earth" - just who are the meek? Perhaps those who care enough to form a global coalition for humanity, with no strings attached for monetary gain, where people would serve their brother and sister because being in service is prized above being in power. In addition to what the aforementioned has already suggested, global issues such as poverty, injustice, hunger, violence, genocide, inequality, and war will no longer be talking points manipulated by political factions, but instead sincere concerns of humans everywhere working together to uplift and solve problems of our human family. Partnership, reciprocity, and right action would be politically correct and survival of the fittest tactics shunned. A responsibility toward others will once again have meaning rather than just paid lip service. Healthcare and education would be rights not privileges. Conscientious Capitalism would replace Predatory Capitalism - or a better methods altogether might be considered, such as a "gift economy" or "caring economics" proposed by Riane Eisler. The treasure from out taxes would go toward building schools and hospitals, not bullets and bombs if we truly want to win hearts and minds. And our great country would lead by example, not dominate with a big stick.

Goddess spirituality, as defined by many contemporary reconstructionists, represents striving for partnership, phasing out hierarchy and power over strategies exchanging them for methods that share leadership, level playing fields with competitors, seeking a win-win situations because it's spiritually and politically correct. Wasn't it Jesus who said a rich man had a better chance of passing through the eye of a needle than entering the kingdom of heaven? Goddess Spirituality could be a piece of the puzzle aiding political and social factors to usher in a revolution of thought where the needs of the many would really win out over the need of the few, the richest, the most powerful, or the most influential. Restoring Goddess to the world stage might be one vehicle leading humankind toward the hope of peace, harmony, and balance.

Getting There From Here

But how do we get from here to there, speaking both spiritually, culturally and politically?

Like Constantine or not, he used Christianity as a glue to help solidify an empire. Why can't proponents of the Creative Feminine Consciousness do the same?

When one considers the vast time line of history, the last several decades are a blip on the screen and like so many others in the West, we have only just begun a serious process of rediscovering, reclaiming, redefining, rethinking, and remembering Goddess and embracing her spirituality in a contemporary world. One thing that is certain is there are many paths and no one way. We should never forget that - in fact we should embrace our diversity with pride and avoid One Book presuming to have all the rules. And we should remember She didn't disappear overnight and it may be our grandchildren or theirs who see her restored at center stage.

First and foremost, to accomplish this shift, we must stand together. Last year the Washington D.C. switchboard system was shut down with calls that altered an immigration bill. Politics aside, a few weeks ago, the New Hampshire Caucus was upset, pundits speculate, by an unexpected influx of women voters and people responding to Hillary's Clinton's humanity - which some have called an expression of the energy of the Sacred Feminine. We saw how people and nations came together after 9-11. Huge anti-war movements inside and outside the United States have had powerful effects. Even though that energy was squandered by our government, it was alive and could have moved mountains. We saw how several women activists, the Jersey Widows, helped bring about scrutiny of the events of 9-11. Putting her life of privilege aside, we saw how Lady Diana Spencer's life ushered in a more related way of being among society in England, and in her death, the British people's outcry altered the response of the monarchy. We the people are not as impotent as the powers that be would like us to believe.

However, those with power are not going to roll over and play dead if they feel threatened they are losing their grip. So again, we must stand together; put aside our internal politics, our personal agendas, for the sake of The Big Picture. We cannot continue squabbling over the scraps at the bottom of the heap while those at the top call the shots and cash-in. The abolition and suffrage movements made progress when they were united. We must do the same again with the growing Creative Feminine Consciousness. And change seems to be happening organically with one example being the presidential campaign, or movement, inspired by Barack Obama. People are responding to his ideas that reflect the needs of the many and not the few.

Educate, educate, educate. Dispel toxic propaganda and encourage a rethinking of the Divine; the Sacred Feminine alongside the Divine Masculine. Men come to understand embracing Goddess does not mean women want to take over the world. Both genders realize feminism is not a dirty word, but a vehicle for equality and it will not unravel societies if both

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of one year (three issues). This will cover printing and shipping costs per issue with \$0.50 to \$0.75 going toward the money needed to increase the page count.

As for back issues, I have made a big dent in the storage area and am getting a better idea of what TBP has. I will be putting the back issue page back up on the website in the summer.

I want to thank all the contributors who submitted material on such short notice. Due to the page count, not everything could be in this issue, but all submissions will be saved for consideration in other issues.

Finally, thank you subscribers and readers, for hanging in there and having faith in TBP.

Lisé Quinn

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wings of the bird are equal in strength. Imagine a world where these are no longer even talking points or wedge issues. Mother and Father together again feels pretty natural and right to most people when they take a moment to think and challenge the programming.

Of course, there are those who might say ancient cultures that embraced a feminine face of God were far from the utopia and they would be right. They might say these ideas are naive and idealistic. The people with the most bullets and biggest sticks always win. Goddess Advocates say to both these charges, we can do better than our ancestors. We are not doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past. We have free will and if we are willing to work hard for change, it will come. We have the knowledge that this patriarchal dominator culture is failing the many. Moreover, we have the technology to enable us to create abundance for everyone on the planet, if used wisely. So they ask, would humanity rather strive for utopia and fall short, or strive for mediocrity and fall short?

People today are literally starving for the sacred. Traditional religion alone no longer works for the masses. Humanity needs to once again be held in the embrace of the Mother and know her love, strength, and acceptance. It is time for us to work together, be visible, and help set the agenda. It is time for our voices to be heard. It is time for us to make a difference in the world, and not just for our children, and ourselves but for our beloved Mother who has been patiently waiting for us to return to our sanity.

About the Author: Karen Tate is a prolific writer, independent scholar, sacred tour leader, and published author. The Joseph Campbell Foundation recently endorsed her first book, Sacred Places of Goddess: 108 Destinations. Her newest book, Walking An Ancient Path: Rebirthing Goddess on Planet Earth, a spiritual/socio/political guidebook to mainstream the Sacred Feminine comes out in 2008. She is the host of Voices of the Sacred Feminine, an internet radio show that airs weekly. For more information, please visit her website at www.karentate.com

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Lana Williamson took over the Water Priestess duties this year and created a beautiful cleansing ritual for us as each of us moved past her and her sacred vessel.

Aurora Whitebird, Shaman, Medicinewoman and Priestess has

been Priestessing this festival with me from the very beginning. As Priestess of the Earth, she gave us each a piece of blue corn to place in our pouches to seed our intention. We concluded our work passing by Amber in the East to affirm our intention.

When we came back to our places in the circle, we joined hands and created a golden sphere around the earth, to uplift, heal and create peace.

The Circle is Open and never Broken Merry Meet and Merry Part and Merry Meet Again! Until Next year May there be more support and better weather.

~Blessings Flash Silvermoon

About the Author: Flash Silvermoon is a nationally known psychic, astrologer, musician, teacher and author. She is an eclectic Dianic Priestess as well as being a vibrational healer, serving the community for 31 years as a psychic astrologer and healer. She specializes in the use of stones and crystals, working with them through layout on the body, grids, elixirs and her own unique combinations called "Power Tools." Flash has been a leader in her field since the early 70's and has recently turned her efforts towards multi-cultural women's gatherings. She offers classes and workshops, tarot readings and astrological readings and healings. For more information on Flash and her services visit her website at www.flashsilvermoon.com Her e-mail address is flashsilvermoon@aol.com or write to her at 7603 NE 221 Street Melrose, FL 32666

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the community has faded. Still, I find the concept that these cloths were used well into the 19th century extraordinary. They were large public wall hangings, shown in a place where the most prestigious sit, presiding over weddings and family gatherings. Indeed, the symbolism links them back in time and space to the textiles we first presented; the felt hangings from the Altai Mountains. That the symbol of a goddess holding a tree was retained on the Atlantic shores more that 2000 year later is significant. Only a record of determined conservation by the makers of textiles can explain it and the concept that motifs migrated with the families whose rituals formed a vital part of their beliefs.

About the Author: Mary B. Kelly is author, artist, and professor of art. Her books Goddess Embroideries of Eastern Europe and Goddess Embroideries of the Balkan Lands and Greek Islands are now joined by Goddess Embroideries of the Northlands, (2007) to complete the trilogy. She is currently working as guest curator on an exhibition of Norwegian embroideries for the Vesterheim Norwegian American Museum in Decorah, IA, which will bring many examples of the ceremonial cloths from Norway to the United States. The show will open in September 2009 and will be accompanied by a conference (Sept 25 - 27) and other textile exhibitions. www.vesterheim.org

Contact Kelly on her website: www.marykellystudio.homestead.com Alternatively, by email: kellym13@juno.com Books, including a new booklet, which includes charts of the Norwegian embroideries, may be ordered from www.studiobooks.homestead.com

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irresistible. To all the world you are just stitching a pretty design on your collar but you know that the rowan leaf motif is protective and is analogous to carrying your wand with you everywhere you

go!

When you are finished stitching your spell you can display it, give it away, or use it on your altar. I recommend that if you display it you change its position in the house with the seasons. I say this because when we see something everyday we tend to become blind to it after a while. Changing its position refreshes your intent and often gives you a new perspective on the issues involved as well as on the picture itself.

Many magical practitioners recommend completely forgetting about a spell after you have caste it. This is often good advice, as obsessing on any issue is obstructive and unhealthy. However certain types of spells require deep contemplation and time to work through the surface issues to come to a clear realization of the core issue that you are really interested in exploring. I recommend taking all the time you need with your spells. Allow them to evolve and change you on a fundamental level. Stitch spells are made for just that purpose. The changes you come to through these techniques are long lasting and fundamental to your growth in awareness. Let your collection of stitchwork to be like your book of shadows or a carefully cultivated garden, recording your progress as well as your path. The magic lives in the stitching and the stitchwork and in the space that lies between.

Karen Tate's Latest Book



"Walking an Ancient Path is a breakthrough in goddess-oriented books

This book is truly a milestone in bridging the gap between mainstream beliefs and the reawakening of the Goddess religion."

~Rev. Denise Dumars

"Walking an Ancient Path takes us on a spiritual journey by one of the

foremost pathfinders of the Goddess movement"

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