
WOMEN AND SPIRITUALITY

by

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Women's awareness of their own spirituality has increased profoundly since the rise of feminism as a philosophy. Just as women do not have to accept a society founded upon patriarchal principles so they also do not have to accept a religion or belief system created by Church Fathers; based on the doctrine of original sin and antagonistic to women's energies, especially women's sexuality. (1)

Whilst there appears to be academic controversy as to whether there was ever a Matriarchal society, it serves as a useful basis for a faith system in which The Goddess is the central figure. As she is three-fold incorporating life in death and death in life, she is manifest in the therapeutic changes of humanistic potential. As transformation occurs the human being is close to the Earth's energies as she undergoes the cycles of the year. Individuals dedicated to organic growth go through many deaths to achieve maturity. The messages of childhood are replaced by adult knowledge and sense of responsibility, dying in their past concepts to be transformed to relevant fertile energy. Thus reincarnation is central to Goddess based belief-systems symbolised by the Wheel of Karma. (2)

The duality of patriarchal systems does not exist; there is no dichotomy between good and evil or black and white; these were created by the church fathers to deny the fertility of Earth-based religions, just as the ancient Greeks brought in male gods and a Zeus who raped women i.e. the symbolic taking over of Goddesses; the early Christian Church denied empowered women and created the devil from Pan; Mother Earth's son and consort. Witch, meaning wise woman, was created by the Inquisition and the growth of 'science-reason'. Women in the Middle Ages were healers, midwives and herbalists; they had many more rights than their sisters of Victorian times when the witch burnings finally stopped. (3)

An estimated 6-9 million women suffered persecution, rape, torture and death from the 14th to the 19th centuries. It is claimed that witchcraft tends to correct what W. Holman Keith called the fundamental religious error of our time: 'to substitute force as the divine and ruling principle in place of beauty and love, to make destruction, in which the process of the male excels, more important in life than the creativity of the female'. (4)

That this is still an issue is evident from scientific research into men bearing children. Religions based upon male creation are an illusion as this is against the laws of nature: all are born of women and carry that sacred essence in the chance of life.

One of the most destructive dualities spawned by patriarchal thinking is that of genderisation, as it has led men to deny the qualities within themselves which have been classified as female - gentleness, nurturing and compassion. These are often stigmatised as weaknesses in opposition to 'male' strength. Sociologists/anthropologists such as Fox and Tiger did society a disservice in the 1960's by overemphasising the role of men as hunters - strong and dominant over women in the hunter/gatherer lives

of our ancestors. (5) Both women and men are deeply connected by the Ancient Greeks with the Goddess whose three faces personified as Persephone, Demeter and Hecate are birth, nourishment and death. These are perpetual forces in the lives of all and to deny them is to embrace sterility and stagnation.

In conclusion, the Virgin; Mother; Crone is incarnate within us all as sexual autonomy, the original meaning of virgin, pure unconditional love, not the traditional ego massaging of conditional love - mother, and the empowering force of taking full responsibility for oneself, one's own life and the manifestation there in - crone. Women's spirituality is a dynamic emphasis on joy and celebration of life.

References

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