

What is the Sacred Feminine?

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The Sacred Feminine is a paradigm of Universal Motherhood. It is a principle that embraces concepts of the Holy Mother, the Goddesses of ancient mythologies, the angelic realms, the Divine Self within, Mother Earth doctrines and lore of indigenous peoples. It is a spiritual model that weaves concepts of wisdom, compassion and unconditional love, plus other metaphysical, shamanic, pagan and magical practices.

The Sacred Feminine is a concept that recognizes that "God" ultimately is neither anthropomorphically male nor female but a Divine Essence (Goddessence) beyond form and duality—an essence that is a balance and unification of masculine and feminine principles—a dynamic, interdependent immanence that pervades all life.

But seeing the divine as an abstract concept of omnipresent consciousness, or immanence is a challenge for most humans. We all have a basic human need to put the inexplicable into a tangible form in order to explore our relationship to it. Thus we tend to anthropomorphize or attribute human characteristics to the unknowable. In other words, we name and assign form to an abstract concept in order to relate to it at our level of ability. So the Divine Essence or Absolute has become a "Father" God figure that we were taught to visualize, pray to and imagine having a personal relationship with. Unfortunately, seeing the vast, infinite, absolute and indescribable Goddessence only in the form of masculine metaphor and symbol has severely limited our human spiritual potential and greatly hindered our ability to live in peace and balance on this earth.

For the last several thousand years the dominant religious belief systems of our world have been patriarchal which sanctioned societal ethics that elevated God the Father over Mother Earth and man over woman. It is time to balance the masculine and feminine principles within our belief systems, our religious doctrines, our cultural ethos, and within ourselves. To gain this equilibrium, we must shift our focus for a while to the idea of Universal Motherhood—we need to explore the metaphor of the Mother, and the symbol of the Goddess. We need to emphasize "Motherly" love, wisdom, compassion and creativity. We must empower women and celebrate their contribution to spirituality, culture and society. And we must awaken ourselves, teach our children and our men.

Awareness of the Sacred Feminine will aid us to appreciate the feminine nature in women *and* men. Awareness of a Universal Motherhood will help us to respect the earth and Mother Nature. Awareness of the Feminine Principle will help us honor women's bio-physical and emotional passages through life, and to help all people (women particularly) to attain healthy self

esteem. And this awareness will encourage all persons to find inner balance and peace thereby increasing respect and tolerance of each other—which ultimately will promote peace on Earth.

It is time to honor the Sacred Feminine. "Honoring the Sacred Feminine" in the spiritual sense, means valuing the feminine principle, along with the masculine principle, as equal and fundamental aspects of the Divine. From a planetary level, it means respecting and healing our Mother Earth. From a cultural standpoint, it means revivifying the archetype of the Goddess through entertainment and the arts and using language that gives equal emphasis to the pronouns "she" and "her". In the societal sense, it means respecting the contribution of women in business, science, art and politics, as well as the home and community. In a religious view, it means creating ceremony that reaffirms our connection to the divine, the Goddess, the earth and each other. In the human sense, honoring the Sacred Feminine means especially valuing the innate worth of woman's mind, body and soul, as well as appreciating the "feminine" qualities in the male character.

As the "Hugging" Motherly Saint, Ammachi, (Mata Amritanandamayi Devi) declared in her address given at *A Global Peace Initiative of Women and Religious and Spiritual Leaders Conference*, Palais des Nations, United Nations, Geneva Switzerland October 7, 2002:

"Women are the power and the very foundation of our existence in the world. When women lose touch with their real selves, the harmony of the world ceases to exist, and destruction sets in. It is therefore crucial that women everywhere make every effort to rediscover their fundamental nature, for only then can we save this world. What today's world really needs is cooperation between men and women, based on a firm sense of unity in the family and society. Wars and conflicts, all the suffering and lack of peace in the present-day world, will certainly lessen to a great extent if women and men begin to cooperate and support each other. Unless harmony is restored between the masculine and the feminine, between men and women, peace will continue to be no more than a distant dream."

Ultimately, what we should advocate is not that a concept of the Goddess replace that of God, but that we hold each spiritual principle with equal reverence. Then in the human dynamics, we can strive not so much to make woman equal in strength to man—but to regard her strengths as equal. In so doing, perhaps then our interpersonal and inter-cultural relationships can achieve a healthier balance and unity. It is time to honor the Sacred Feminine—to remember and reclaim our Heritage—in order to restore wholeness within our religions, our selves, our communities, and our earth.

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Defining the Sacred Feminine, like defining "God", is an impossible task. However, to begin to nurture our awareness of this concept, I offer the following collection of ideals, values and attributes that describe "Sacred Feminine" which I have summarized from the comments and writings of many people:

The "Sacred Feminine" paradigm...

- ◆ Is the nurturing, welcoming, accessible, kind, gentle (yet firm or fierce when necessary), compassionate, accepting, affectionate, forgiving, patient and wise attitude of the Loving Mother Essence
- ◆ affirms and values the "Divine Mother" or Goddess as birthgiver and creatrix—as the aspect that brings life into the world. Regards consciousness and love as the dynamic powers of Life and Creation
- ◆ cherishes nature and all the earth's beings—affirms life and appreciates all its beauty, bounty, diversity and mystery as well as respecting its ferocity. Acknowledges the multi-dimensionality of Being. Sees the human body, and soul or spirit as inherently good and worthy of esteem

- ◆ sees the Divine as the intelligent consciousness and life force essence within all life and immanently accessible within each being, versus the Divine as only an external "God" or "prophet" or only accessible through "chosen" or "ordained" individuals or unchallengeable scriptures
- ◆ fosters peace, moderation, and balance. Promotes respect, acceptance and tolerance of others—"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you" and "do what you will, but harm no one"
- ◆ believes in "Magic" as events (currently scientifically inexplicable) of positive synchronicity, serendipity, "coincidences" to which an individual contributes in the creation of by one's intention through visualization, affirmation and action, and recognizes by intuition
- ◆ encourages a holistic approach to healing of mind, body and spirit and fosters positive self-esteem, inner growth, Self-awareness, Self-realization, and Self-actualization. Values the cultivation of one's inner wisdom, intuition, inner truth, inner divinity
- ◆ is especially respecting, empowering, and encouraging to women (to balance the centuries of suppression of the feminine nature), yet without elevating one gender over another. And particularly validates and celebrates woman's passages of menarche, menstruation, birth-giving, and menopause
- ◆ values the reclaiming, rediscovering, remembering and restoring of the lost ancient evidences of matrifocal societies and cultures, Goddess archetypes and lore, and the history (herstory) of empowered women—leaders, priestesses, healers, mothers, artists, saints and activists
- ◆ cherishes devotional, creative or artistic expression (dance, music, poetry, etc.), as a valuable, sacred experience
- ◆ respects egalitarian, partnership and democratic models of community and societal structure, and promotes non-hierarchical, non-authoritative, non-dogmatic style of leadership
- ◆ honors *cycles* of life, nature, of the body and the individual. Respects the process of death as a natural (and sometimes potentially benevolent) cycle of nature and respects an individual's freedom of choice in death
- ◆ respects a woman's freedom of choices in family planning, birth control and birth-giving
- ◆ regards the dark side of nature and human consciousness not as evil but as a manifestation of the "winter" and destructive cycle of nature and thus part of the eternal process of life and learning
- ◆ encourages us to be present in the moment; appreciates inner reflection and meditation
- ◆ encourages us to hold the intention of compassion, love and patience in all actions and thoughts no matter how significant or mundane
- ◆ appreciates the inventing, adapting, and sharing of ceremony and ritual to assist one and another through life's cycles, individual changes, passages and yearly seasons
- ◆ regards sexuality as a natural and intrinsically good and sacred experience between loving, consenting partners whether for pleasure or procreation, and values timely and tactful sex education of our youth
- ◆ promotes personal integrity. Encourages us to live life honorably for the experience of the blessing it is now—not for some reward in "heaven" or out of fear of punishment in "hell". And since all life is seen as interconnected, we are also encouraged to be accountable and responsible for our intentions and actions, knowing "What you sow, you reap".
- ◆ honors the language of the Heart as well as the reason of the mind
- ◆ recognizes that there is a male and female aspect to each personality and encourages both men and women to cultivate the balance of their own inner masculine and feminine aspects.

