
SOCIAL ASPECT OF HUMAN BEING

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Goddess Worship and New Spirituality in the Postmodern World: a Brief Overview

Purpose. The paper aims at examining the phenomenon of the rebirth of the Goddess in the contemporary world. The author has used the hermeneutic approach and cultural-historical method, as well as the anthropological integrative approach. **Theoretical basis.** The study is based on the ideas of Carol Christ, Margot Adler, Miriam Simos, and Jean Shinoda Bolen. **Originality.** The rebirth of the Goddess is not a deconstruction of the God. The face of the Goddess is one side of the binary opposition "Goddess – God". Life on the earthly plane presupposes masculine and feminine dualism. However, these polarities are not mutually exclusive and mutually suppressive, but complementary to each other. The return of the Goddess to the throne and a profound appreciation of Femininity is a necessary step forward in establishing true equality and restoring lost harmony. As humanity returns to the Absolute that transcends duality, as divinity is revealed in feminine and masculine forms, and, finally, as humans get in touch with their true self, the two faces, feminine and masculine, will inevitably merge. **Conclusions.** Identifying herself with the images of the Goddesses, a woman develops self-awareness and self-acceptance that contribute greatly to her reintegration with a wider spiritual reality. The cult of the Goddess finds practical application in women's lives. These are magical rituals, work with the archetypes, life-changing tours. Recognizing her right to the fullness of being, a woman overcomes rigid gender roles and stereotypes, ceases to be an object of manipulation and becomes the supreme arbiter of her own life.

Keywords: Great Goddess; woman; man; gender; psychospiritual approach; psyche; Carol Christ; Margot Adler; Miriam Simos; Jean Shinoda Bolen

Introduction

The contemporary world deeply mired in contradictions requires a polylogue communication model, in which different voices can be heard. Being aware of a large number of the ways of perceiving, thinking and feeling, we have a chance to recognize and explore "alternative realities", and the sacralization of the world, revival of interest in collective identity, myths, magic, and women's mysteries are among them. Neo-Paganism, or Modern Paganism, which has been flourishing in the different countries, especially in the United States, Europe and Australia, since the second half of the 20th century, places greater emphasis on the feminine principle. The energy that takes the form of feminine spirituality is represented in the images of the Goddesses.

For centuries, women were taught that they were subordinate beings, at best, assistants to men. Religion has become one of the tools to suppress the will and self-expression of a woman. Even today, world or national religions include a belief system that views a woman as evil or belittles the role of feminine: from the interpretation of her physiology to the statements about her sinfulness and "secondary" nature. For a long time, spirituality and relationships with the higher "I" have been considered the prerogative of men's consciousness, since a woman's body has been interpreted as a vessel of sin. These views have justified the policy of female victimization in society (Daly, 1978).

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The concept of the center of the patriarchal world – the male God – has been criticized by M. Daly, J. Kristeva, J. Plaskow, L. Irigaray, R. Adler, to name but a few. The ideas of feminist theorists have enriched world feminist and theological thought with alternative "reading" of religious images and traditions and have enabled the different voices of the Other. V. Sukovataya emphasizes that the ideas of revolutionary feminist theology merge with ecofeminist philosophy. For the true spiritual liberation of women, it is necessary to create completely new, alternative forms of faith, which would be based on the principles of women's spiritual development (Sukovataya, 2002).

Purpose

The paper aims at examining the phenomenon of the rebirth of the Goddess in the contemporary world. The author has used the hermeneutic approach and cultural-historical method, as well as the anthropological integrative approach.

Statement of basic materials

Even though women were given a significant place in many religions, their merits were quickly forgotten, and sexism and misogyny explicitly woven into religious practices of the peoples of the world did not allow women to express their true spiritual self. As Mary Daly argued,

Patriarchy is itself the prevailing religion of the entire planet, and its essential message is necrophilia. All of the so-called religions legitimating patriarchy are mere sects subsumed under its vast umbrella/canopy. They are essentially similar, despite the variations. All – from buddhism and hinduism to islam, judaism, christianity, to secular derivatives such as freudianism, jungianism, marxism, and maoism – are infrastructures of the edifice of patriarchy. All are erected as parts of the male's shelter against anomie. And the symbolic message of all the sects of the religion which is patriarchy is this: Women are the dreaded anomie. Consequently, women are the objects of male terror, the projected personifications of "the Enemy", the real objects under attack in all the wars of patriarchy.

(Daly, 1978, p. 30)

Despite deanthropomorphization, God is subconsciously perceived as a man, and this is deeply rooted in different languages and cultures. Where images of God are not prohibited, we see

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him as the male God. The metaphor of God the Father, Heavenly King refers to the hierarchical structure of society and male dominance, which, in turn, serves as a justification for patriarchy. Shaping cultural ethos, religious symbols define the values of society and have a profound impact on the psyche of its representatives. Explaining the importance of religious symbols, Carol Christ – a leading feminist historian of religion and theologian and the author of "Rebirth of the Goddess: Finding Meaning in Feminist Spirituality" (1998) and "A Serpentine Path: Mysteries of the Goddess" (2016) – refers to Clifford Geertz who interprets religion as

A system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. (Geertz, 1993, p. 90)

This symbolic world shapes our perception, and if men can identify themselves with their God-the Creator, it is impossible for women to do so without denying their true feminine essence. Carol Christ states that patriarchal religions

Create "moods" and "motivations" that keep women in a state of psychological dependence on men and male authority, while at the same time legitimating the political and social authority of fathers and sons in the institutions of society... she (*a woman*) can never have the experience that is freely available to every man and boy in her culture, of having her full sexual identity affirmed as being in the image and likeness of God (Christ, 1978, p. 2).

Emphasizing the connection between religions and the depths of the psyche, Carol Christ considers four aspects of the Goddess symbolism: the Goddess as an affirmation of female power, the female body, the female will, and women's bonds and heritage.

Modern adepts of the Great Goddess refer to the ancient Goddesses and interpret them through the lens of the present regardless their subordinate position to the male Gods. Revealing itself today in the psyche of a modern woman, the archetype of the Great Goddess comes to the fore. It is personified in many forms of the Great Goddess – from the heavenly female deity (divine femininity) to the symbolic energy of birth – death – rebirth to the assertion of the legitimacy of female power. During her whole life, a woman experiences different aspects of the Great Goddess.

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The Great Goddess legitimizes the female body and its mysteries. Instead of embarrassment, shame and guilt for her physiology, a woman takes pride in being a woman allowing herself to be herself. The Great Goddess equally embraces all aspects of a woman's life – Maiden, Mother, and Crone. And every part of this fascinating journey called "life" is full of deep meaning.

Awareness of female divinity put the emphasis on the will that is particularly important for women in their search for the true self. A woman is no longer a plaything of fate or more or less benevolent social groups, but she is rather a full-fledged creator of her own destiny and the destiny of the world.

Carol Christ interprets the female will as a harmonious unity of the vectors of wills and energies of all living beings, and the awareness of the "revealed" woman about the cyclicity of the processes in the Universe contributes to this unity. Carol Christ warns against understanding the female will as egocentrism; just the opposite, it is this will that is capable of taking into account the interests of the other people.

A new interpretation of women's bonds and heritage are of great importance. From submissive creatures without free will, who eventually turn into beings competing for resources provided by men, women move to a new level of their development and realize their inextricable connection with each other and their unconditional value. The most basic meaning of the symbol of the Goddess is the recognition of the legitimacy of female power as beneficent and independent power. Women's identification with the image of the Goddess brings a "mood" of joyful celebration of women's freedom and independence, as well as an awareness of the true female power in the world, the Goddess's "power is to be with us and to understand us and to always inspire us to love more and understand more" ("Imagining God", 2018).

A deep understanding of the need for harmonious life leads to a mindful attitude to the other people, nature, and the planet as a whole (Kolesnykova & Matveyeva, 2019). Margot Adler – an American author, journalist, New York correspondent for National Public Radio, Wiccan priestess, an elderly in the Covenant of the Goddess – was firmly convinced that esoteric and mystical traditions provided an opportunity for unconventional spiritual exploration and growth. Defining monotheism as imperialism in religion, the granddaughter of the distinguished psychiatrist Alfred Adler and the author of the "Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America" (Adler, 2006) considered Paganism as the spiritual side of feminism.

Studying Greek goddesses at the age of 11, Margot Adler decided that it was better to become one of these goddesses than to worship them, as she found "that the images of women in the 1950s were so cardboard, so stereotyped, that the goddesses seemed deeper, more vibrant, more powerful, and I wanted to access whatever that was in my own journey to become whoever I was going to become" (Morgana, 2018). The Pagan reality based on seasonal ceremonies that are so close to Nature and emphasis on doing instead of believing help us to see the Earth as sacred, to see all beings as an essential part of the Universe, to understand the divine as immanent that encompasses the whole world. It should be noted that the last point matters for rights and freedom struggle, as well as for self-actualization and discovery of one's true self. According to Margot Adler, Pagan religions assert that divinity is in us, we are goddesses that makes it possible for us to bring harmony to the Earth we call home and to put an end to the destruction of our planet (Drury, 1995).

The other searcher for a vibrant Earth religion is Miriam Simos, also known as Starhawk. She is an American writer, activist, ecofeminist and one of the prominent leaders in the revival of earth-

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based spirituality and Goddess religion. According to Starhawk, our male-dominated world order leads to patriarchal oppression and ecological destruction that entails the feeling of loneliness, isolation, and alienation. Starhawk called it consciousness estrangement: we are strangers to everything and everyone including ourselves; our world is a mechanic construction made of nonliving, isolated parts. The author of "The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Goddess" (Starhawk, 1999) and "Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics" (Starhawk, 1997) states,

Estrangement is the culmination of a long historical process. Its roots lie in the Bronze-Age shift from matrifocal, Earth-centered cultures whose religions centered on the Goddess and Gods embodied in nature, to patriarchal urban cultures of conquest, whose Gods inspired and supported war. Yahweh of the Old Testament is a prime example, promising His Chosen People dominion over plant and animal life, and over other peoples who they were encouraged to invade and conquer. Christianity deepened the split, establishing a duality between spirit and matter that identified flesh, nature, woman, and sexuality with the Devil and the forces of evil. God was envisioned as male – uncontaminated by the processes of birth, nurturing, growth, menstruation, and decay of the flesh. He was removed from this world to a transcendent realm of spirit somewhere else. Goodness and true value were removed from nature and the world as well. (Starhawk, 1997, p. 97)

Destroying the world, this patriarchal structure is gradually dying out and should be replaced by more egalitarian structures with many women in power. Overcoming separation, fear, rivalry, a new world can be born out of harmony, love, self-sacrifice, and reverence for life.

Starhawk is a highly influential Pagan theorist and practitioner who describes herself as a witch: "I'm a Witch, a real one, not a hoagie-nose wavy wand type..." (Robin & Starhawk, 2021). Witchcraft is the art of changing our consciousness. Starhawk believes that a witch performs a special function in society being the Goddess's messenger and a live-giver. Establishing witchcraft as a religion of the Goddess, Starhawk says that her mode of strength is the sacredness of the world, and the Goddess is the name of a living organism we are all a part of (Drury, 2004).

This kind of mythical concept goes far beyond the occult tradition of magic and women's mysteries. Jean Shinoda Bolen came to a similar point of view on the basis of the premise that

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myths are the path to the deeper levels of the psyche. Dr. Bolen is a psychiatrist, Jungian analyst, and renowned author of "The Tao of Psychology: Synchronicity and the Self" (2005), "Goddesses in Everywoman: Powerful Archetypes in Women's Lives" (2014a), "Gods in Everyman: Archetypes That Shape Men's Lives" (2014b), "Goddesses in Older Women: Archetypes in Women over Fifty" (2014c), just to mention a few. Though many people see myths as something archaic that is not linked to our reality in any way, Dr. Bolen says that myths make it possible to see our life from a different perspective and to gain an intuitive understanding of who we are. Following Carl Gustav Jung, she postulates that myths connect us to the collective unconscious, reveal intimate truths about ourselves and others, and express core ideas that are part of the human species as a whole. Describing archetypal Goddesses and Gods collectively inherited by human beings, Dr. Bolen seeks to prove that we all have a chance to become the embodiment of Goddesses and Gods, and such a mythical transformation opens the way to a broader planetary consciousness (Drury, 2004).

Following her own "path with heart", Jean Shinoda Bolen believes that humanity has to renew the connection with the Earth as the source of sacred energy. Supporting women, appreciating their different voice and background, she states that women are more "equipped" for contact with the earth and the other people, though nowadays more and more men are ready for it too. This spiritual transformation will lead to the significant change in the collective psyche of humanity and to our awareness of our unity on our planet.

Once we believe that there is a purpose to life and that we have a soul, then what we do with our life matters. Archetypes, dreams and synchronicity provide depth and direction, especially during times of transition when one phase of life shifts into the next. When soul and purpose come together, when we follow a path with heart, then we are on course.

(Bolen, 2020)

Such spirituality challenges the opposition of organized religions and secular life, trying to bring a higher dimension into life without turning it into a certain set of orders, rules, prohibitions, restrictions imposed from above. Its adepts seek power through love and connectivity with each other and our planet that holds us.

Originality

The rebirth of the Goddess is not a deconstruction of the God. The face of the Goddess is one side of the binary opposition "Goddess – God". Life on the earthly plane presupposes masculine and feminine dualism (Danylova, 2017). However, these polarities are not mutually exclusive and mutually suppressive, but complementary to each other (Danylova, 2015; Khmil, 2019; Khmil & Malivskyi, 2017). The Goddess does not devalue a man and does not exclude the masculine principle as the Other. She is a life-giver for both women and men. As Carol Christ notes, "the job of the goddess is to inspire you – no matter your gender" ("Imagining God", 2018).

It is also worth pointing out that the new Goddess is not a copy of the Goddesses of antiquity. The modern-day Goddess might resemble the ancient Goddesses, but her image is filled with new meaning: she is not the Goddess of the past, but the embodiment of the future of humanity – the future world of harmony, love, respect, equality, and happiness. The return of the Goddess to the throne and a profound appreciation of Femininity is a necessary step forward in establishing true equality and restoring lost harmony. As humanity returns to the Absolute that transcends duality, as divinity is revealed in feminine and masculine forms, and, finally, as humans get in touch with their true self, the two faces, feminine and masculine, will inevitably merge.

Conclusions

Identifying herself with the images of the Goddesses, a woman develops self-awareness and self-acceptance that contribute greatly to her reintegration with a wider spiritual reality. An important aspect of the return to the true self is the recognition of the absolute value of feminine essence in the context of Maiden – Mother – Crone corporeality. The cult of the Goddess finds practical application in women's lives. These are magical rituals, work with the archetypes, life-changing tours. For example, Carol Christ leads women on a Goddess Pilgrimage to Crete. One of the tour participants said, "The tour changed my life, I am no longer asking who I am, I know..." ("Goddess Pilgrimage", 2021). Recognizing her right to the fullness of being, a woman overcomes rigid gender roles and stereotypes, ceases to be an object of manipulation and becomes the supreme arbiter of her own life.

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Поклоніння Богині та нова духовність у постмодерному світі: короткий огляд

Мета. Стаття спрямована на дослідження феномену відродження Богині в сучасному світі. Автор використав герменевтичний підхід, культурно-історичний метод, а також антропологічний інтегративний підхід. **Теоретичний базис.** Дослідження базується на ідеях Керол Крайст, Марго Адлер, Міріам Саймос і Джин Шинода Болен. **Наукова новизна.** Відродження Богині не є деконструкцією Бога. Образ Богині – це один із полюсів бінарної опозиції "Богиня – Бог". Життя на земному плані передбачає дуалізм чоловічого і жіночого. З поверненням людства до Абсолюту, який трансцендує дуальність, із розкриттям божественності в жіночій і чоловічій формі й, нарешті, з набуттям людьми свого істинного "Я" два образи – жіночий і чоловічий – неминуче зіллються. **Висновки.** Ототожнюючи себе з образами богинь, жінка розвиває самосвідомість та самоприйняття, що значною мірою сприяє її реінтеграції з ширшою духовною реальністю. Важливим аспектом повернення до істинного "Я" є визнання абсолютної цінності жіночої сутності в контексті тілесності Диви – Матері – Крони. Культ Богині знаходить практичне застосування в житті жінок – це магичні ритуали; робота з архетипами; паломництва, що змінюють життя. Визнаючи своє право на повноту буття, жінка долає жорсткі гендерні ролі та стереотипи, перестає бути об'єктом маніпуляцій і стає верховним арбітром власного життя.

Ключові слова: Велика Богиня; жінка; чоловік; гендер; психодуховний підхід; психіка; Керол Крайст; Марго Адлер; Міріам Саймос; Джин Шинода Болен

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