

Q & A with Isabella Price, author of
Goddess Power: Awakening the Wisdom of the Divine Feminine in Your Life

What is the Divine Feminine/Goddess?

The Divine Feminine at its source is one. Yet the Goddess is known by innumerable names and manifestations across the world's cultures. Many of these conceptions are mysterious and seemingly paradoxical. Some manifestations show the Goddess as the benevolent, nurturing Mother; others represent her as the fierce and even terrifying Mother who dances on the cremation grounds. The Divine Feminine has been honored and worshiped as the Virgin Mary, Diana, Cerridwen, Hecate, Pele, Inanna, Athena, Demeter, Sarasvati, Kuan Yin, Brigid, Yemaya, Tara, Kali, Asherah, Isis and White Buffalo Calf Woman, to mention just a few. But beneath these many different faces, aspects, and symbols we find the enduring essence of the Divine Feminine, which is always the same.

No matter how she may appear to us, the way of the great Mother is ultimately always rooted in the Power of Love and the Supreme Truth. If we sincerely invoke her assistance, we can always trust her loving, unwavering guidance. Let us remember that the story of the Goddess in *our* story – it is a story of love and healing, birth and death, renewal and evolutionary change... And it is the Mother of the Universe who holds the key for this new vision of a brighter future for humanity.

Why is the re-emergence of the Divine Feminine so important at this time?

We are now collectively going through this dark night of the soul with its fair share of suffering and loss, as we can see everywhere. Yet we also need to remember that it is often in suffering and in the darkness that we can gain illumination and wisdom.

After millennia of suppression of the Divine Feminine—as a result of the increasingly patriarchal paradigms that emerged in all systems of organized religion across the cultural spectrum—the Goddess is once again becoming a powerful symbol for what is most needed in our modern and postmodern times. Our world is out of balance. Humanity faces serious crises and challenges: political power abuse, wars, economic inequality, social conflicts, environmental devastation, racism, sexual abuse, and the list goes on. As result, we are in need of the wisdom of the Divine Feminine to guide us.

When we look at the teachings of all the Goddess wisdom traditions, we can see that the following values are honored: cooperation (creating “win-win” situations), partnership, inclusivity, creativity, playfulness, sustainability, peaceful resolution of conflict, responsible stewardship of natural resources, and a generally more nurturing, caring, and supportive environment that takes our mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing into consideration. In the Goddess traditions, all expressions of life are viewed as intrinsically sacred — everything is connected or interrelated in the great web of life. Spirit and flesh (and by extension the body and nature) are viewed as ONE. We are talking here about a more holistic and brighter vision for the future of humanity — a future that is rooted in Goddess values.

How does the Goddess express herself in men as well?

The Goddess expresses herself in both women *and* men. So while it is important to address, for example, the social standing of women and talk about the fact that women are still underrepresented in most of our institutions of power, we also need to look at these values and archetypal qualities of the “masculine” and “feminine” and how they are being played out in our

culture by both men and women. When talking about the “masculine” and the “feminine,” it’s important to *dissociate these terms from gender given that both women and men have the entire range of potentialities, archetypes, qualities, and values* that I’ve described at their disposal, both psychologically and energetically.

Please offer a brief overview of “God as a Woman” with examples from different cultures and religious traditions

In its roots, Goddess worship dates to the so-called “old stone period” when our ancestors were hunters and gathered food. As the sustainer of life, the great Mother is found at the entrance of rock shelters, carved out of stone more than 20,000 years ago. After the transition to farming and the domestication of animals a few thousand years later, the Goddess was often associated with animals, most notably birds, fish, and snakes. After 3000 BCE, in the scriptures of ancient Egypt and Babylonia, the great Goddess was honored as the “Queen of Heaven,” “Sustainer of all Life,” and even as the “Savior of the Human Race.” The great Mother was viewed as the creative matrix, the cosmic womb and vital life force. Yet, just as everything is born from the Mother Goddess... and in the end, everything returns to her. She is the first and the last. Birth, growth, decay, and death are stages within the sacred life cycle.

We may also note that during the time of Jesus Christ, the Aramaic word for God was actually “parent”. In other words, God was viewed as both Father *and* Mother. Later on in Western culture, the Mother aspect of God eventually got lost in translation and was ignored by the church and institutionalized religion in general, with the exception of the mystics or saints in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, who have always honored the Feminine Face of the Divine as well. And even today, in some religions such as Hinduism, the Goddess is still widely popular and worshiped as the “Divine Mother” in the *Shakta* tradition (prominent examples are the Hindu goddesses Kali, Durga, Lakshmi, and Sarasvati).

How can the Goddess help us make sense of what’s going on in the world today?

Of course, there are reasons and a deeper purpose underlying all the chaos, upheaval, and conflicts that we witness in the world today. A deeper understanding of the Goddess wisdom teachings can definitely help us to make (more) sense of it all and shed some light on the current situation. A good example for this are the dark-skinned Mother Goddesses across cultures. As I see it, they are powerful symbols and also a major catalyst for the changes that are currently underway on the planet.

The Dark Mother in all her forms represents the shattering of the old patriarchal values and paradigms that do not serve us any longer. She is the evolutionary catalyst who turns everything that we expect or took for granted upside down. A good example is the dark-skinned Hindu goddess Kali whose image was projected on the Empire State building in NYC in the fall of 2015 just before election year, which I find an interesting coincidence! In India’s *Shakta* tradition, Kali is viewed as the Dark Mother who shatters all of our illusions and helps us face our worst fears so that we can evolve psychologically and spiritually. She is worshiped as an embodiment of the Supreme Truth.

We can also look at the Black Madonna in her function as a “change agent.” There are many examples when social justice movements have invoked the Black Madonna across the globe. Mexican farm workers, for example, have repeatedly invoked the Madonna of Guadalupe as protectress against oppressive governments. And in Poland in the 1980’s, the worker’s movement “Solidarnosc” also carried a large icon of the Dark Madonna of Poland when they

demonstrated against oppressive Soviet rule. So we could say in this context that the Black Madonna *is* the ultimate “sacred activist” who drives change and sustains repair and healing in the world. And she really *is* the Mother of *all* people — no matter what social status, race, gender, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation.

The Dark Mother hence represents renewal and evolutionary change. As we are now collectively going through this dark night of the soul, all of our repressed psychological “shadow issues” and fears of the Unknown are coming to the surface. Dark goddesses are also symbolically related to the untamed forces of nature as well as the mysteries of the night and death that have been collectively repressed in our Western culture. As I see it, it is the Dark Mother who guides us through the chaos and the birth pangs that precede transformation. And she reminds us that in the darkness, in the crucible of loss and suffering, we can gain illumination and wisdom.

How does one awaken the wisdom of the Divine Feminine in their life?

Of course, we all have our unique spiritual journey – and not everybody feels called to deepen his/her connection to the Divine Feminine. So I can only speak from my experience. I would say first and foremost, your genuine and heartfelt intention is essential to call the Mother into your life. To become more attuned to Her energetically and psychologically, you need to slow down from time to time and take some deep and conscious breaths. Then you will be able to tune more easily into your intuition/body wisdom, and perhaps get a message from Her. I would say that walks in nature, honoring the Earth and connecting with all the beautiful beings with whom we share this planet, is essential as well. What helped me to get more attuned to the Mother are visualizations and invocations of Her, meditations, prayers, devotional practices as well as rituals honoring and celebrating Her in all her forms and also beyond form as *Shakti* (cosmic energy/vital life force).

My encounter with Ammachi—known as the Indian “Hugging Saint” or Mother of Immortal Bliss—also had a great impact on my life. It has been very healing for me over the years to spend time in her presence Amma, whom I met for the first time in 2004 at her ashram in San Ramon, CA, opened my heart and made me much more attuned to the Divine Feminine. I have been very privileged and blessed to receive numerous hugs and spiritual transmissions from her over the years.

How do you think the wisdom of Goddess teachings help to address and/or heal dysfunctional behavior patterns such as sexual abuse of women by men?

I believe that abusive sexual behavior patterns of males generally reflect a deep psychological wounding and a profound disconnect/alienation from their true Self and everybody and everything else. These dysfunctional patterns cannot be healed unless males are being taught at an early age to view women’s womb/bodies (and, by extension, the body of Mother Earth!) as sacred and as deserving of respect, to say the least. Of course, this would also have to include transformative spiritual practices and teachings that allow for a healthy (or healthier) balance and integration of the values of the Divine Feminine (cooperation, partnership, creativity, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and generally a more nurturing and life-affirming attitude).

When we look at the prehistoric period as well as the great civilizations of Egypt, Babylonia, and India a few thousand years ago, we can see that the Goddess was highly praised for her great powers and numerous functions. Her womb was viewed as the cosmic womb of all creation, and

by extension women's wombs and their bodies were viewed as sacred and imbued with the life force of the Goddess. Since then, women's bodies have become increasingly sexualized and objectified, as we can see today with forced prostitution and pornography proliferating into a huge multi-billion dollar industry. Patriarchal institutionalized religion has, for the most part, contributed to the image of women's bodies as being "inferior" to Spirit and prone to "sin" and "temptation" because women are "closer to nature" due to their child-bearing function. The most extreme expression of this attitude was the demonization of women accused of witchcraft in the 16th and 17th centuries. Witches were believed to kill newborn babies, destroy the crops, and engage in sexual intercourse with the devil. A strange reversal of the ancient powers and functions of the Goddess, indeed!

Of course, our so-called progressive society today doesn't burn women as witches anymore but similar unconscious collective beliefs and entrenched fears of women's power and female sexuality persist nonetheless in many different disguises in the psyche of male predators and sex offenders. Moreover, male control/power over women and "physical ownership" of their bodies is still a practice sanctioned by some forms of organized religion and cultures across the world.

Most forms of organized religion today worship God exclusively as "Sky Father." Has God always been viewed as a "Father?"

Compared to the worship of the great Mother Goddess dating to the prehistoric period 20,000 BCE and more, the understanding of God as "Sky Father" is actually fairly recent in Western culture. Roughly we can say that the worship of God as the archetypal "Father" emerges primarily in the first millennium BCE with the Abrahamic religions stating that there is only *one* God. There are many historical explanations and reasons for this development but chief among them is that these religions became increasingly managed and dominated by men. And more often than not, the aspect of "God as Mother" was lost in translation of scripture or deliberately omitted. For example in early Christianity, God was rather viewed as a "parent"—that is, as both father *and* mother (note: the Aramaic word for God was "parent," and Aramaic was the language of Jesus Christ). We also need to remember that the great mystics and sages in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have always venerated the Feminine Face of the Divine in addition to the Masculine Face of the Divine. In the Jewish mystical tradition of Kabbalah, for example, the feminine divine presence on earth is referred to as the divine Bride of the God of Israel.

We can definitely say that practically all forms of organized religion in all cultures became increasingly patriarchal over time. This development was, for the most part, a sharp departure from the progressive vision of their founders who were great spiritual pioneers...

How do some of the representations of the Sacred Feminine in Christianity (Mother Mary and Mary Magdalene) compare to examples from other religious traditions?

If we look at the Christian Trinity, we can see that Mother Mary is *not* included. The Trinity affirms God exclusively as "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." These teachings were introduced by the institutionalized Church centuries after the death of Jesus Christ. In the 4th and 5th centuries CE, Christianity had become a religion that was exclusively managed by men (as opposed to early Christianity in the first century when religious diversity flourished and women were given a voice as leaders in some Christian communities). Although Mother Mary eventually became elevated to the status of "Queen of Heaven" when her Ascension became official church doctrine in the 1950's, Mother Mary is still *not* considered on par with the Trinity. And she is certainly *not* viewed as a Goddess in her own right, although it's interesting to see that many of her symbols and functions recall the great pre-Christian Mother goddesses, most prominently the

Goddess Isis in Egypt. Just as women today pray to Mother Mary and ask her to cure the sick, they prayed to Isis for healings from diseases thousands of years ago. And Mother Mary's golden crown of stars, for example, relates her to some pre-Christian goddesses in their function as "Lady of the Zodiac."

So we can say that Mother Mary continues to a certain extent the traditions of the pre-Christian goddesses in Christianity, although her role is considerably more limited and her powers have been greatly curtailed.

Few figures in the history of Christianity are as provocative, controversial, and mysterious as Mary Magdalene—the "apostle to the apostles"—who was Jesus' most beloved disciple, according to some non-canonical scriptures that were discovered just a few decades ago. According to these Gnostic scriptures, Mary was not only the first to witness the resurrection (as we also read in the official Gospels) but she was also the one who got initiated by Jesus into the core of his wisdom teachings because she was able to understand the deeper spiritual meaning of these teachings. In other words, her position of leadership is earned and validated by Jesus himself in these non-canonical Gospels, plus there is evidence that Mary Magdalene also led a circle of female apostles who had to meet mostly in secrecy because of strictly enforced patriarchal norms and rules. As we know, the Church eventually denigrated her as the "redeemed prostitute" and even demonized her as "the woman who had been possessed by seven demons," as we read in Luke. Yet, scholars today clearly reject this characterization of Mary Magdalene as a fabrication by Pope Gregory the Great dating to the late 6th century CE. As I see it, Mary's initiation into the core of Jesus' wisdom teachings also relates her to the spiritual tradition of ancient Egypt, where priestesses of the great Goddess Isis were trained in highly advanced mystery schools.

What is the deeper meaning of the ancient "Sacred Marriage" rite for our times?

In ancient Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq), the king was wedded ritually to the high priestess, viewed as an embodiment of the great goddess Inanna/Ishtar. The Sacred Marriage rite held the promise of a plentiful harvest and ensured the cyclical renewal of nature and all of life. In later times, the interpretations of this rite underwent some variations and became more spiritualized by the mystics as the union of the soul with the beloved Divine. As I see it, we could also say that our times call for a Sacred Marriage, a union of the archetypal masculine with the archetypal feminine within us to heal ourselves and bring us into alignment with the Earth. I firmly believe that a viable and sustainable future for humanity will only be possible with a healthy balance and integration of both the masculine *and* the feminine at this critical evolutionary threshold. We need to reclaim the sacred in both masculine and feminine and bring them together in cooperative partnership, as equal partners in the dance of co-creating our future.

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