



The sacred feminine is a the term we use for that mysterious source of all life, the wellspring of creation - the big She, the feminine force that births both male and female forms, the circle that contains both yin and yang, the portal between the worlds. She is by nature indefinable, yet her presence has been experienced so tangibly by peoples of the earth from the beginning of time, that She has been honoured and deified in many forms as bringer of life, growth, decline, death and rebirth by many ancient cultures.

Men's relationship with the divine feminine

While intrinsically the nature of this essence is beyond gender, the divine feminine is experienced uniquely by men and women. What we have witnessed through the journey of the men in The Grail – A Hero's Journey to the Self, is that it seems his deep masculinity is only truly reclaimed in relationship to, or in service of, this divine feminine principle. God as consort to goddess.

Within the journey of initiation that is The Gift and The Grail, many women and men have been moved by what feels to be a deeply familiar reverence for the god/goddess that appears within each one of us and indeed have spoken of 'seeing' faces or forms that we see familiar throughout history as embodiments of the divine feminine and her consort.

We see this god/man imaged as sexually potent, wild, creative, free, and in service to the earth. It was only in right relationship to her that the people and the land were made abundant and fertile. We find rituals in many cultures for maintaining balance between spirit and matter, the heavens and the earth. Remnants of these survive today in festivals and ceremonies that mark the seasons and life passages of birth, death and marriage. Often they acknowledge the recurring cycles of life and death and the rebirth that ensues.

Consorts of the goddess

In the European tradition we have the horned god, the green man, Cernunnos, Cerne, Dionysus, Pan. Also, there are the hunter, warrior, magician, shaman, lover, lord of the dance. Associated animals were stag, bull, wolf, lion, horse, and bison to name a few; each potent with his capacity to procreate and destroy with his power.

Mythology also gives us Shiva, Osiris, and Quetzalcoatl; each able to claim sovereignty only by virtue of his reverence for the divine feminine principle. These archetypes embody both life and death and were acknowledged long before patriarchal culture separated good from evil, light from dark, heaven from hell, god from the devil. Lucifer, meaning light, is also a face of god.

Male initiation

In many ancient cultures, the final initiation into manhood was often conducted in the presence of a female shaman or priestess. Though what occurred is in the realm of mystery, it is recognised that this final surrender of separate ego-self was a condition associated with the feminine. In Australia one of the final pieces of aboriginal male initiation was to be buried alive in the mother, the earth, often dusted with ash to look as if dead. They would also spend time with wounds that they would consciously self-inflict to feel what it is to be wounded, to know pain, and rest in non-doing. It is suggested that this also mimics the magical time of female menstrual bleeding. Through this a man was made aware of his small but unique place in relation to the vastness of the universe. For men of western white culture, perhaps the courage to put down the weapons, the tools of industry or the will to conquer, and feel his relationship to this earth is paradoxically his completion. In allowing not only his capacity for doing (his masculine) but to surrender into being (his feminine) his soul finds balance and fulfillment.

At a soul level, all human suffering seems to be a sense of separation from the divine. The fulfillment of this ultimate yearning of the spirit for union, belonging, becoming whole is known as Hieros Gamos – the sacred marriage. In the rite of initiation within The Grail, where there are always three women present as 'priestesses', the courage and willingness of the individual man to let go of his 'idea' of himself – the persona, identity, ego-self – allows him an integration of his greater, heroic, archetypal, god/self; that which connects us all and from which all purpose for living arises. Thus humbled and heartened, he may now truly serve his family, his community and give his greatest gifts.