



'Feminism was a battle and I think a lot of women now want to put down their arms and to just love and to say that this is who I am, just as powerful, just as valuable as the masculine.'

Sheila Broun, artist, teacher and Priestess Hierophant of the Goddess with the Fellowship of Isis, sees war as arising from patriarchal values and believes that the resurgence in interest in the Goddess is to do with our fear of annihilation. 'We're seeing that western cultures in particular are out of balance and very war-orientated. There have been a number of movements throughout the 20th century that have gradually highlighted that we're out of balance and that everything is very male-orientated culminating with the feminists in the latter part of the 20th century who deconstructed patriarchy and looked at particularly religion and how women were psychologically held in second place.

'In doing that they discovered references to a goddess and they didn't know what that was, so for the next 30/40 years, women – archaeologists, anthropologists, sociologists, all kinds of people – have been writing, researching, dating and looking at cultures and now we're at the point where we have DNA out of Africa and we're tracing back and we're seeing that humans have been around for a tremendously long time and this way that we live has only happened for around 4,000 years. In the span of time, it's very small. We're going back to the past to look at things and bring out of that things to use in the future. It's not being stuck in the past, it's looking at what's useful and what can be used.'

Sun and Moon

Thornton also senses that this new interest in the Goddess is harking back to an ancient tradition: 'I have a nagging feeling in my gut that it's more of a return to our roots than a birthing. When I work with my ancestor spirits – and I'm talking ancient spirituality, I guess pre-Roman to be as accurate as I'm able – there's very much a sense of feminine power; this is very much in balance with masculine energies, but much more steely than what might be

seen as stereotypical femininity. There's nothing fluffy or soft about the more feminine spirit allies I've been blessed with, but I don't believe it's a case of one size fits all; the divine feminine, to me, encompasses all faces of womanhood, from free-flowing flower maiden to fierce warrior woman to the wise old crone of few words and huge teachings.'

Interestingly Broun believes that the goddess worship you find in religions such as Hinduism and Shinto is important because, even though women are clearly living in very chauvinistic societies in both India and Japan, and are often oppressed, 'psychologically the goddess conveys legitimacy.' Watch a typical Bollywood movie and there is often a scene in which a 'helpless' female is inspired by the goddess and is filled with super-human strength to wreak her revenge on her oppressors. It may have pathos but it seems to reinforce the idea that a woman can only achieve dynamism through the intervention of a higher power.

'I think everything has been turned around opposite to what the truth is,' says Broun. 'You've only got to look at UN statistics that say women do two thirds of the world's work for one percent of the world's money and 10 percent of the world's property. Women are not passive people and the whole emphasis on the moon goddess has led women back into the position of passivity that they have been assigned by patriarchy. They're actually very dynamic and I don't think women are partly male and partly female, we're double XX, dynamic and receptive as women. In Britain we have both a sun and a moon goddess. I think it is part of the backlash of confusing everything again. Women have got to a point with the goddess cultures and pinpointing something that frightens patriarchy to death.'



(left) Taz Thornton; (right) Christianna Caeliss