Vision for a Post-Patriarchal World

by Marcia K. Matthews

Extract

Picture yourself in Stone Age Europe, a peaceful, matrifocal, agrarian society where women and men have equal status. In 4400 BCE, tribes from the Steppes invade the village with metal weapons and slay the men, rob the rich pickings, and take over the women. Marija Gimbutas found a divide in artifacts, to "Big Man" graves. Goddess symbols like the bee, the spiral, the snake, and the egg disappeared from the cooking pots. Everyone scoffed at her timeline until recent genetic evidence on the Y chromosome shows an abrupt change in the DNA of European males in 4400 BCE to a different progenitor. So now we can date the overthrow, and we can understand how it happened. But how do we reclaim our time of a peaceful, equal society?

**Vision for a Post-Patriarchal World**

“In the beginning…was a very female sea. For two-and-a-half-billion years on earth, all life forms floated in the womb-like environment, planetary ocean, nourished and protected by its fluid chemicals, rocked by lunar-tidal rhythms.” ~Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor

“During the Neolithic, there was a renewed flowering of artistic expression. The invention of ceramics around 6500 BCE, marked the appearance of thousands of figurines and vases, temples and their miniature models, wall paintings, reliefs, and countless ritual articles.” ~Marija Gimbutas, The Civilization of the Goddess

According to Peggy Reeves Sanday, Matriarchy refers to a system of symbols and practices that places senior women at the social, emotional, aesthetic, political, and economic center of daily life along with their brothers.

Heide Goettner-Abendroth defines matriarchy to mean “mothers at the beginning.”

Carol P. Christ defines **Egalitarian Matriarchy** as a society and culture organized around the mother principle of love, care, and generosity, in which mothers are honored and women play central roles, and in which men also have important roles, and every voice is heard.

From the dawn of human time to Stone Age Europe, people revered the Goddess Mother. As a girl in Stone Age Europe, let’s call you Mary. In your world, God is a woman. This is all you know. Society is organized around mothers and their brothers and children. We are peaceful and agrarian. Nobody needs weapons or fences. Goddess symbols such as the bee, the spiral, the snake, and the egg ornament your cooking pots. Women and men have equal status and possessions. You have a friend who’s a boy and you play together and learn together. Your parents treat you and your brother with equal regard.

Now it is 4400 BCE (before the common era). A tribe from the Steppes, north of the Black Sea, invades your village. Armed with metal weapons, they rob your rich pickings of grain, oil, and wine. They slay your men, and take your women. Your mother fights and they kill her. They take you as a child to their way of life.

The women ride horses. They are expert riders and fighters. They are Amazons, and they raise you as an Amazon. Mary, you are no ordinary woman. You become a leader under the patriarchy. “Every woman has a fink streak, but it comes from a lifetime of living among men.” Valerie Solanas

The tribe worships a war god, the “Big Man.” They take over your land and dominate society forever after until today and this is where we are.

We know this because Marija Gimbutas catalogued 2000 artifacts of the ancient world. In her book *The Language of the Goddess*, she portrayed Goddess-worshipping, earth-centered cultures, and brought matriarchal society to life. Everyone in the field of anthropology scoffed at her timeline of 4400 BCE for the overthrow of matriarchy, but recent genetic evidence has clinched it. The Y chromosome, which is handed down from father to son, shows an abrupt change in the DNA of European males right around that time. It coincides with a change in artifacts and symbols. No more Mother Goddess, now it’s the war god and his war horse, and the sun god and his weapons.

When the god-worshipping forces came in, the goddess people did not go down without a fight:

In Greece, the women took to the hills and became Maenads.

In Turkey, they had a temple to the Goddess Artemis. When Paul came to Ephesus, they shouted him down. “Great is Artemis, Goddess of the Ephesians!”

In Teutoburg Forest, they said that the Goddess Germania stood in the road and stopped the Romans under Varus.

Bull-dancing gave way to bull fights. It was the custom in Crete to show courage by vaulting the horns of the bull. Now they sacrifice the bull.

In England they built Avebury, and Stonehenge. Avebury with its rounded natural stones, each an individual. Stonehenge with its columns and dolmens, more of a clock than a temple.

In Ireland, they carved the Sheila na gigs. Many of these rock carvings still ornament the churches. They represent the female sex. P.J. Harvey celebrates our sensuality with her song:

Look at these, my child-bearing hips  
Look at these, my ruby red lips  
Look at these my work strong arms and  
You’ve got to see my bottle full of charm.

Saint Patrick turned to a pagan charm to protect himself from the King of Tara:

**I bind unto myself today the virtues of  
the starlit heaven,   
the glorious sun’s life-giving ray,   
the radiance of the moon at even,   
the flashing of the lightning free,   
the whirling wind’s tempestuous shocks,   
the stable earth, the deep salt sea  
around the old eternal rocks.** (trans. Lady Gregory)

This hymn has come down to us as the “Lorica,” a mystical garment to protect the wearer. Legend says that it turned Patrick and his followers into deer, and they passed unharmed.

In Italy, the priestesses linked arms and walked into the sea, chanting “Maré, Maré.”

In 1336 in Lithuania, the Teutonic knights arrived with the Northern Crusade to convert the pagans to Christianity. The people clung to their beliefs in their Moon god and their Sun goddess Saule. At Pilenai, they were outnumbered and stood no chance of winning. Four thousand men, along with thousands of women and children burned their possessions, burned the fortress, and crossed themselves over.

Animal deities adorned the gates of Babylon, where Ishtar ruled until she was overthrown by Marduk.

In India, Kali embodies the concept of time. With her necklace of skulls, she dances on Shiva.

Africans call the Goddess of the Sea Oshun. They brought her worship to the new world with them as voodoo.

In China, Kuan Yin emerged from the 9th Century incarnation of a boddhisattva. She became Goddess of Mercy for Chinese women, who gathered around her humble altar. Whenever things are desperate and hopeless, She appears to comfort and heal those in distress. She has come to the West, and many here have experienced her appearance in their lives. She comforts and protects us.

Vestiges of Goddess worship and matriarchy remain like banked-up embers. We value our traditions. We are overwhelmed with the weight that has been thrown upon women and girls. It doesn’t have to be this way. We can change this. We’re all in this together. We all belong in this world. Women need recognition and equality.

In the current day, in the nation where we live, women don’t have equal rights under the Constitution. The founding fathers deliberately excluded the ladies. We live under High Patriarchy.

Look around us, at the killings of women and girls. We are afraid to walk outside at night. There have been more women killed than all the men in all the wars this country has fought. Pornography is the propaganda of rape. Our status can be seen every day on the internet. Young, impressionable children stumble upon these images and are traumatized.

Around the world, women suffer vicious attacks, acid in the face, FGM, beatings, murders, trafficking. In China and India, 70 million girls are missing from the population due to sex selection.

American women once thought we would lead the way to liberation. Didn’t we live in the land of the free? Couldn’t we be the protectors and liberators of our sisters? Look at us now. We can’t even free ourselves. Rapists go unpunished with over 200,000 rape kits untested. One in four are repeat offenders, averaging 1,000 per state in the U.S.

At the Women in the World Summit, actor Terry Crews advised that masculinity is a cult. “Just as slave-owners saw slaves as less than human, men see women as less than human. A guy is not looking at you as even all the way human. This is what you have to understand—there is a humanity issue here. [Women are] like, ‘Why don’t you hear me? Why don’t you see my feelings?’ And [men are] like, ‘But you’re not all the way human. You’re here for me, you’re here for my deal.”

The #MeToo movement has gotten rid of some toxic men. Women have allies. There’s a hashtag #AskMoreOfHim. David Schwimmer and Dr. Jason Katz hold men accountable. Dr. Katz, author of “The Macho Paradox,” says, “Some men equate manhood with dominion, power and control.”

Twenty years ago in Northern Ireland, Monica McWilliams came to the peace table. She represented a coalition of women as the Human Rights Commissioner. She spoke on the BBC Women’s Hour. “Women learned to accommodate and compromise with other women from the other side. The first thing on everyone’s mind is, how safe are we going to be? We were not just living in a patriarchy, we were living in an armed patriarchy.

“When you make peace and you build peace, we have set the foundations for women to come forward in public life. When women came to peace talks, the men told us to shut up and sit down. After a while you start internalizing some of that, but we have to believe. Peace is about transforming those attitudes. Is it going to take us another hundred years for women to be accepted in public life equally standing alongside men?

“Women bring something different. We deliberate differently. We discuss it more than just say it. We spend our lives accommodating, finding ways to resolve conflicts. We get hurt in different ways than men. We’ve suffered too much. Not all women are peacemakers, but those in the women’s coalition are.” That was Monica McWilliams talking to the BBC on the 20th anniversary of peace in Northern Ireland.

“We get hurt in different ways than men. We’ve suffered too much.” Sometimes I wonder how we survive the war on women.

According to statistics, the vast majority of killers are men, and women are disproportionately the victims. Rapists and killers of women have three things in common:

Lack of empathy, a belief in traditional sex roles, and authoritarianism.

“Hardcore material gives them a certain attitude toward women.” An attitude of entitlement, domination, and power-tripping. In “Mindhunter,” the story of the FBI unit studying serial killers, 81% of murderers of women reported use of visual sexual stimuli, pornography. They are turned on by violence. Porn purveyors incite crimes, and they should be prosecuted.

Satirist Greg Proops said, “There’s nothing in the world that can’t be cured by our attitude toward women changing to one of **enormous respect**. Humanity’s downfall is that the matriarchy had to be overthrown so violently and contested so hotly for so long. And look where we’d be now, if women were in charge.

“When you think about the people who have the ball now, in media and government, misogynist, racist, violent gun-owners, they’re in the minority. If women were in charge, there’d be education, family leave, women would get time off to have children, school lunch and Head Start programs.” And I’d like to add, health care.

In order to create a society where women live free, and men experience a new reality, we hereby declare the rights of women:

1. A woman who defends her life and honor shall go free.
2. Women shall determine our clothing and customs.
3. Sex is a mutual decision and is not for sale.
4. Women shall have clear passage. A man shall not challenge her right to be in a public place, day or night, and in her private space, she shall be inviolate.

Sandy Boucher, author of “She Appears: Encounters with Kuanyin,” says we need her “fierce compassion.” She brandishes a sword to cut through delusion. Every organized religion on the globe is male-supremacist. “Replace the voice in your head with that of Kuanyin. What would she say to me? Let’s create a beloved community that lets everybody in.”

As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “I still have faith in the future. We always have to look at the ultimate. We are a long ways from our goal.” During the 1967 riots, he said, “Instead of Burn, baby, burn, I say, Build, baby, build. Organize, baby, organize.”

Around that time, women began to organize consciousness-raising groups. We would go around the room and speak about our lives, and we found that we all had experiences in common. Back then, anatomy was destiny. Then the Roe v. Wade decision freed us from the fear of accidental pregnancy. The powers that be have been fighting it ever since, not because they care about babies, but because it’s the best way to keep women down.

We have reached the dark night of the soul when a terrorist group, known as Daesh among Arab nations, is called ISIS by the media, tarnishing the name of a Goddess; and when, even here, the terror of femicide curtails our freedom.

In a different world, what would economics look like? Look at productivity, hours, distribution of wealth, and priorities for spending. Women do the majority of unpaid care work. We own less than 20% of the land, and we are the most devastated by climate change. Gina McCarthy, formerly of the EPA, says manmade emissions cause it. “That’s why women need to rule the world.” (smile) “I’m sick of cleaning up after you.”

Can we hope to reclaim that time, of the peaceful, equal society? There has to be a change in the hearts of the people. We grow weary of patriarchal rule, with its warlords and oppressors. The resurgence of the Goddess presages a new era. To save the Earth herself, we have to make it happen.

Look into your hearts. Can’t we rescue our pale blue dot in the universe from plastic trash in the ocean, guns and bombs, polluting smoke, coal sludge in the rivers, and a dirty internet? Can’t we rescue our fellow creatures, the elephant and the butterfly, the whale and the whippoorwill? There’s no winnable nuclear war. Can’t we rescue this Earth?

To balance this world, we have to want it badly enough.

Can the time of early matriarchy with its peaceful, abundant nature, be reclaimed? In my play Amazone, I show that with the advance of civilization and technology, women take over a country.

How would we rule?

Would we be gentle and non-violent?

Or would we seek after power, money and real estate?

Would we abuse power?

Would we compete with each other?

Would we objectify people?

Would we be intersectional, or would we form cliques and “other” certain people?

Is it nature or nurture that makes women more peaceful and cooperative?

The advance of civilization favors women, but we must focus and work hard. We’ve got to stop fighting each other and find common ground. Instead of revolution, evolution is more humane.

We must heed the words of the Goddess, serve cheerfully, maintain chastity, and prove ourselves worthy of Her divine grace.

Merry meet and merry part, blessed Be.

**The Charge of the Goddess (adapted from Doreen Valiente)**

When ye have need of anything

Once in the month and better it be when the Moon is full

Then shall ye assemble in some secret place

and adore the Spirit of Me

who am Queen of all the Witcheries.

And ye shall be free from all slavery

and in token that ye be really free

Ye shall sing, feast, make music and love,

all in My presence.

For mine is the ecstasy of the Spirit

and mine is also joy on earth

for my law is love unto all beings.

Keep pure your highest ideals; strive ever towards them.

For mine is the secret that opens upon the door of youth,

And mine is the Cup of the Wine of Life

and the Cauldron of Cerridwen,

Which is the Holy Grail of Immortality.

Nor do I demand aught of sacrifice

For behold, I am the Mother of all things

and my love is poured out upon the earth.

Hear ye the words of the Star Goddess

She, in the dust of whose feet, are the hosts of heaven,

Whose body encircles the universe:

I Who am the beauty of the Green Earth

and the White Moon amongst the stars

And the mystery of the Waters

And the desire of the human heart

I call unto thy soul to arise and come unto Me

For I am the Soul of Nature

Who gives life to the universe

From me all things proceed

and unto Me they must return.

Before my face, beloved of gods and mortals

Whose innermost divine self

shall be enfolded in the raptures of the Infinite,

Let my worship be in the heart.

Rejoice, for behold,

All acts of love and pleasure are my rituals.

Therefore let there be beauty and strength,

Power and compassion, honor and humility,

Mirth and reverence, within you.

And thou who seeketh Me,

Know that thy yearning avail thee not

Unless thou knoweth the Mystery

That if that which thou seeketh

thou findeth not within thyself,

thou wilt never find it without thee.

For behold, I have been with thee from the beginning,

and I am that which is attained at the end of desire.

Lucius Apuleius invoked the Goddess with Roses and Prayer. In his book *The Golden Ass*, he describes:

**The vision of Isis**

I woke in sudden terror and saw the moon’s orb at the full, shining with dazzling brilliance, emerging from the sea. I knew that cloaked in the silent mysteries of nocturnal darkness, the supreme Goddess exercises her greatest power. Her guidance governs human affairs; not only cattle and wild creatures but even lifeless things, quickened by her power and her light’s divine favour; all bodies on land, in sea or air, wax with her as she waxes, and wane in obedience to her waning. Now fate seemed sated with my sufferings, and offered me hope of deliverance, and I determined on praying to the powerful image of the Goddess before me. I rose happy and eager. Wishing to purge myself I ran at once to the sea to bathe, plunging my head seven times under the waves. Then, my face wet with tears, I prayed to the Great Goddess:

‘Queen of Heaven, whether you are known as bountiful Ceres, the primal harvest mother, who, delighted at finding your daughter Proserpine again, showed us sweet nourishment, and now dwell at Eleusis; or heavenly Venus, who at the founding of the world joined the sexes by creating Love, propagating the human race in endless generation, or Diana, you who relieve the pangs of childbirth, venerated now at Ephesus; or dread Proserpine herself, she of the night-cries, who triple-faced combats the assault of spirits shutting them from earth above, who wanders the sacred groves. Oh, light of woman, illuminating every city, nourishing the glad seed with your misty radiance, shedding that light whose power varies; in whatever aspect, by whatever name, with whatever ceremony we should invoke you, have mercy on me in the depths of my distress. Grant good fortune, give me peace and rest after cruel tribulation. Let the toil, the dangers I’ve endured suffice. Restore me to the sight of my people; make me the Lucius I once was. Or if I may not live, if I have offended some deity who hounds me, grant me the gift of death.’

When I had poured out my prayers in pitiful lamentation, my fainting spirit sank back. I had scarcely closed my eyes when a divine apparition appeared, rising from the depths of the sea, her face worthy to be adored by the gods themselves. Slowly she rose, till her whole body was in view, shaking herself free of the brine to stand before me, a radiant vision. If the poverty of human speech allows me, if the Goddess grants me a wealth of inspiration, I shall describe her marvelous beauty to you.

Her long thick hair spread over her divine neck and shoulders, and her head was crowned with a garland of flowers. Over her brow, a disc like a mirror or moon-symbol shone with brilliant light. Coiled vipers reared from the right and left of her coronet which bristled with ears of corn. Her robe of finest linen gleamed here pure white, here a saffron yellow, there flaming rose-red, with a woven border flowing with flowers and fruit, and what dazzled me most of all was her jet-black cloak with its full sheen, wrapped gleaming about her, slung from the left shoulder, knotted at the breast, and sweeping over her right hip. It hung in sweetly undulating folds down to a tasseled fringe, and along its borders and over its surface fell a scatter of glittering stars, round a full moon breathing fiery rays.

In her right hand she held the *sistrum*, a strip of bronze curved in a loop, with coins strung on rods across which gave a pleasant sound as her forearm shook to a triple beat. In her left hand, she bore a golden boat holding a serpent with a swelling throat, rearing to strike. Her feet were covered with victorious palm. The divine shape, exuding the pleasant spice of fertile Arabia, she distained not with her celestial voice to utter these words to me:

**Book XI:5-6 The Goddess commands**

Behold, Lucius, I am come. Thy weeping and prayer hath moved me to succour thee. I am She that is the natural mother of all things, Mistress and Governess of all the elements, chief of the powers divine, queen of the dead, queen of the immortals, manifested alone and with one form of all the gods and goddesses. At my will the planets of the sky, the wholesome winds of the seas, and the lamentable silences of hell be disposed. My name, my divinity is adored throughout the world, in variable customs, and by many names. The Phrygians call me Cybele; in Attica, the people name me Minerva; in sea-girt Cyprus I am Venus; Diana to the Cretan archers; Proserpine to the Sicilians; at Eleusis, I am Ceres; Juno to some, to others Hecate, while the races of both Ethiopias, first to be lit at dawn by the risen Sun’s divine rays, and the Egyptians too, deep in arcane lore, worship me with my own rites, and call me by my true name, royal ISIS.

Behold I am present to favor and aid thee. Put away all thy sorrow, for behold the healthful day which is ordained by my providence.

Listen carefully to my commands.

Remember one thing clearly, and keep it locked deep within your heart: the life that is left to you, to the final sigh of your last breath, is pledged to me.

It is right that all your days be devoted to Her whose grace restores the world. Under my wing, you will live in happiness and honor, and when your span of life is complete and you descend to the shades, even there, in the sphere beneath the earth, you will see me, who am now before you, gleaming amidst the darkness of Acheron, queen of the Stygian depths; and dwelling yourself in the Elysian fields, you will endlessly adore me and I will favor you.

Know too that if by obedience, dutiful service, and perfect chastity, you are worthy of my divine grace, I and I alone can extend your life beyond the limits set by fate.’

I am all that is, has been, or ever will be.

No mortal has yet been able to lift the veil

that covers me.