

The Asteroids - Witches, Goddesses or Wise Women

by Tess Cullen

Who are the witches?
Where do they come from?
Maybe your great, great grandmother was one?
Witches are wise, wise women they say,
There's a little witch in every woman today.

Where is the goddess walking today? Where is that wild and wise aspect of the feminine, the spirit of the witch, dripping with passion and intuition, driving us deeper into an inner sense of knowing. Psychologically the feminine is the urge to unify: to create: to give life to: to protect, preserve and transform as she governs the cycle of birth, growth and death. *She* represents our instinctual behaviours. *She* is what it means to be human, vulnerable and therefore open, responsive and receptive. *She* makes things whole and complete. Within us all live ancient and instinctive memories of the feminine essence. The power of the feminine is dramatically resurging into the modern world, yet there are many places where *she* is held back and not acknowledged. Powerful Goddesses of old have returned to the world of astrology through the study of asteroids. The acknowledgment and exploration of these new voices of the feminine can help to redress the balance of power between the masculine and feminine in the world today.

Feminine archetypes¹ are represented by major asteroids that form part of the asteroid belt situated between Mars and Jupiter. The asteroids are fragments of a planet that, long ago, was pulled into Jupiter's orbit, exploded due to its size and gravitational strength, and created the asteroid belt. Between 1801 - 1807 the first four major asteroids were identified and named: Ceres, Pallas-Athene, Juno and Vesta. Mythologically, these were very influential ancient goddesses each a member of the twelve Olympians, sitting side by side with the gods Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto. As a group the asteroids represent the feminine sign Virgo, a sign that focuses on the refinement of the personality and the journey to individual wholeness.

Glyph	Name	Discovered
♀	Ceres	1801
♁	Pallas Athene	1802
♃	Juno	1804
♁	Vesta	1807

"The power of the goddess has been in a state of deep sleep for the last three to four and a half thousand years. With the discovery of the asteroids, the power of the feminine has at last been activated and released into our conscious awareness."

Demetra George²

Today the asteroids represent the re-emergence and restoration of powerful feminine archetypes to the consciousness of humanity. They are awake and "demanding power, recognition, justice, and equality in our society."³ This is an experience not restricted by gender, many have found new pathways that allow them to explore previously hidden or forbidden realms. Ceres (♀), the great mother, represents the changing story of the rights of mothers (parents) and children; Pallas Athene (♁) the goddess of wisdom, represent the fight

¹ An **archetype** is a universal thought form, prototype, primordial mental image inherited by all, patterns deeply imprinted in the collective human psyche

² Demetra George, *The Asteroid Goddesses* ACS Publications 5th Ed 1992 p 2

³ op cit p15

The Asteroids - Witches, Goddesses or Wise Women

for intellectual and political freedom; Juno (♁) the goddess of marriage, represents the balance of power in intimate relationships and Vesta (♁) the temple priestess, represents our journey towards spiritual and sexual freedom.

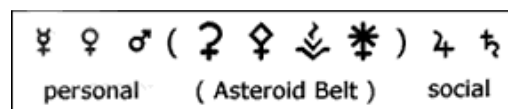
Astrologically the discovery of a planet, or asteroid in this case, is the beginning of the emergence and recognition of that energy into the collective consciousness. By naming the asteroids after strong mythological Goddesses the essence of their myths are brought into the light of day. Historically, the effect of these emerging energies can be recognised, both collectively and individually, through the changing attitudes to women. The discovery of the Asteroids at the beginning of the 1800's coincided with the beginning of the women's rights movement, which was a turning point in the modern story of the evolution of women. In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote the first feminist text, *The Vindication of the Rights of Women's*. Ms Wollstonecraft claimed that arguments supporting the Rights of Man as defined by the American and French Revolutions were equally applicable to women.

By the 1840's brave women, such as Charlotte Bronte, author of *Jane Eyre*, (1847) were dropping their pseudonyms and demanding acknowledgment for their creativity. The first women doctor, Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, was also officially recognised in New York(1849). The cogs of change had begun and the Married Women's Property Act in England 1857 was passed, giving married women the right to keep any monies that was their own prior to the marriage. In 1881, four women were accepted as university students in Melbourne. By 1896, 12 women doctors established the Queen Victoria Hospital, for the treatment of women only. Women gained the vote in the early 1890's in New Zealand and America. Australia followed in 1894 and included with the right to vote and the right to sit in parliament. By the 1900's women were breaking down the barriers that excluded them from fulfilling roles and equal rights. In 1921, Edith Cowan was the first Australian female politician elected to the Australian Parliament.

During the 1960's through to the 1990's a huge surge in the recognition of the equal rights of women was witnessed with many goals being actualised. Women rose to positions of power and were actively and openly able to participate in society and its development. Men were able to choose roles that had been traditionally filled by women such as nursing, or the primary domestic carer of children. Those who personify the changing role represented by the individual asteroids have had a profound effect upon the changing cultural attitudes towards the feminine.

Within the religious, political and social structures, as well as the laws of the world, there are still images, attitudes and role models that help to support the oppressed status of women. Ways of being, that are insidiously ingrained into the fabric of life through the dominance of a patriarchal world, that still need to be identified and re-balanced.

The consciousness represented by the asteroids prefers each individual to come to their own awakenings and realisations. As part of our personal identification process, each story develops and matures, and then integrates through



us into the social world. It is imperative that each and every one of us take responsibility to recognise our own beliefs and behaviours and be clear about whether we support, or ignore, the re-empowering and equalising of these themes in our lives. Consider the following storylines as part of your soul's development. Which witch dominates your psyche, your way of being?

The Asteroids - Witches, Goddesses or Wise Women

Ceres, The All-Powerful Mother



Ceres is the largest asteroid and the core of the exploded planet and represents the all powerful mother. She represents an infinite source of compassion, nurturance and abundance. Caring for her children is of prime importance and brings supreme joy to her. Her role of motherhood is sadly devalued by our society where the support for single parents rates little more than an unemployed adult. We find her in issues of co parenting, the custody of children, sole parenting, adoption issues and men being nurturers She collects lost soul's in need of care and is represented in all the parents who have experienced the loss or separation from a child. When we stretch our view further afield the plight of the homeless, the refugees and world care organisations are part of her governance. . Ceres will not finish grieving until the parent/child bond is considered sacred in all walks and places in the world.

Ceres is the goddess of grain and agriculture and we can look to her for issues relating to food and how we function as nurturers in our relationships. The quality of nurturing we received as a child influences our behaviours regarding our self worth and the ways in which we nurture our selves and others. What was it like around your dinner table growing up?

Ceres is the keeper of the Eluesian Mysteries, a ritual cleansing of the soul dedicated to letting go of those we grieve for. During a time of fasting and dreaming, Ceres allows us to withdraw from the world at large to deal with inner unresolved issues. Whenever we go into a cleansing ritual to heal our body or soul we are invoking the help of Ceres.

Equally the health of the earth comes under her dominion, the harvest, the changing seasons and the fruits of the earth. The droughts, issues of global warming and dimming are reflections of the Earth's suffering. Ceres as Mother Earth seeks our consciuos awakening about the way we treat and look after the planet and its children.

Pallas Athene, The Warrior Goddess



Pallas Athene, a brilliant strategist and general in battle, sat at the right hand of Zeus as his greatest adviser. She is the patroness of Athens, known as the encourager of the arts, supporter of universities and bestower of the olive tree. In more modern times she was seen as the Suffragette who worked tirelessly to gain equal rights and the vote for women. She is an intelligent, task orientated person who looks for win/win situations. I often refer to her as the Goddess of Conflict Resolution. She is the wise woman who helps us to seek answers to problems, to believe in and assert our intelligence.

Pallas desires to stand as an equal in life partnerships, 'equality or nothing' is her calling card, being much more interested in work than the feminine wiles. In intimate relationships her freedom is ultimately unimportant and will not be relinquished as part of a marriage bargain.

In modern times Pallas represents political and negotiating skills, using intelligence and the creative process to break through limitations previously adhered to. Through her women can be warriors, "to plot the clash of heroes from afar, dressed in the finest armor, moved by the finest wisdom"⁴. Where were the female warriors when you were growing up? There were none. We had bewitching Samantha, co-depdnent Jeannie or the "if only I'd been born a man" Marion. I wanted to be Robin Hood not the watered down mothers (Moon types) or would be lovers (Venus

⁴ Phyllis Chester, *Women & Madness*, Doubleday and Co, 1972

The Asteroids - Witches, Goddesses or Wise Women

types), behaving as slaves to the men in their lives, even as they rescued them at every turn. Thank god(dess) for my Wonder Woman and Supergirl comics. Nowadays there are positive role models that establish a new empowered feminine archetype. Thankyou to Zena, Dark Angel and the Madonnas of this world. Where would we be without them.

Juno, The Queen



Juno, who recognised the rise of the patriarchal forces taking dominion over the known world, chose a merger of power. By marrying Jupiter, Juno maintained her position and saved her people and her country from war. Alas, over time she lost her power through this relationship and marriage, reflecting the way the feminine lost status as the male dominated ways became the 'norm'. She embodies the artfulness needed in relationship dynamics and wants empowerment for all within relationship.

Juno often experiences the story of the eternal triangle, for Jupiter was forever on the chase of another women. Triangular relationships can be a common theme in her life and often she must learn to reclaim power within her dominion. Juno can help us gain insight into recurrent relationship patterns around jealousy, betrayal, loyalty, money, fidelity, codependence, abuse and intimacy issues. These issues must be negotiated.

Juno as the Goddess of marriage urges us towards union; she draws us from individuation into partnership and believes in finding a soulmate. She employs the qualities of respect and commitment in relationships and she works tirelessly toward this end. Relinquishing control of yourself by too much negotiation and not enough fight can be her undoing.

Vesta, The Goddess of Time-out



Vesta is the Temple Priestess, the Keeper of the sacred flame, the Oracle, the all seeing goddess of sacred women's business and esoteric knowledge. Vesta, not caring for status or worldly ambitions, gave up her seat of external power on Olympus to keep her focus on being in union with the divine. Throughout the ages she was known and punished for the magic of her psychic vision and denounced for the use of witchcraft. Vesta seeks to be true to the heart/mind connection, she motivates through our passions as she embodies the search for enlightenment.

Vesta loves rituals and altars. Being the least public of types, her reflective nature enjoys time in retreat. I often refer to her as the goddess of 'time out'. She is self contained she will pull your focus inward to seek answers to life's questions.

As a virgin goddess her sexuality is dedicated to the divine. She does not marry yet she is not celibate she had lovers and knew the arts of sexual pleasure, the art of bringing body, soul and spirit together, often referred to as Tantra. Her devotion to a spiritual direction in life includes the union of spirit and sexuality. Due to the 'chastity belt' placed upon women's sexuality over the centuries Vesta can indicate many issues around sexuality from sexual repression to prostitution.

Being a temple priestess she enjoys sharing time with other spiritually orientated souls. When not in retreat Vesta is community minded and will often be found in a group of like minded people or those of the same gender. Her sense of service to others is a tireless energy that motivates her.

The Asteroids - Witches, Goddesses or Wise Women

These summaries tell some of the main themes associated with each archetype and denote the qualities and representations symbolised by these four asteroids. The position of each asteroid, by sign, house and aspect, shows the strengths and weaknesses of the inherent themes that you participate in throughout your life. These can be essential parts of your core nature, empowered and effective or as an area of difficulty that confronting your essence. In a strong position archetype of the asteroid has a central theme in your story, your drives and the life purpose. These themes show up as major or minor roles throughout your life. In a lesser position an asteroid will flesh out your character and uncover subtler subplots with amazing clarity. We can embrace, understand and accept these forces in our lives as each one of us recognise the threads of these archetypes

As you recognise an empowered aspect of these feminine forces, rejoice and be radiant in that experience and show others what is possible. If it is a dis-empowered aspect you recognise embrace it also and acknowledge that you are not alone on this journey. Within these archetypes are woven the golden threads of recovery and healing to set us all free. Their myths are deeply embedded in the unconscious of all people and continue to live through us and affect our lives.

It is time to recognise and embody these various archetypes represented by the asteroids. Be empowered by the acknowledgement of their existence and go past the limitations that have been placed upon the feminine. Take time to connect with the original state of these deities and look deeper into the stories of their power and position. Delving into the myths can illuminate the path to follow. The goddesses are willing to aid those who choose to change the limitations, to break free of the shackles that have suppressed the feminine power and withheld balance. Accept their help to regain your purpose, position and power in the modern world.

The withches, the goddesses and the wise women are back. We have many to thank for changing the role of the feminine, and the evolution of the feminine archetype, The journey continues, with a lot more faces to be seen and stories to be told. At last we have choice. Today there is an accessibility to be whoever you want to be.

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