

The World Mother: Teachings of Helena Roerich and Geoffrey Hodson

John Nash

Abstract

Among the wealth of insights contributed by Helena Roerich and Geoffrey Hodson were important teachings about the divine feminine individuality known as the World Mother. This article explores the two authors' teachings and compares them with each other, with eastern and western religious beliefs, and with contributions from other writers of the last 100 years.

The major thrust of Roerich's and Hodson's teachings is that the World Mother has manifested many times over the millennia, most recently as Mary, the mother of Christ. It is suggested that "World Mother" is in fact an office, part of a hierarchy extending from planetary to cosmic levels, which has been held by a succession of entities. The office-holders align themselves with the deva evolution, which has a feminine polarity juxtaposed against the masculine polarity of the human kingdom.

The World Mother is described mostly, but not exclusively, as expressing beauty, joy, and even playfulness. She is also described as serving humanity in a nurturing role, but she has a special affinity for nature and the natural world. Reportedly, the Mother is now becoming more active in human affairs and urging us toward relevant areas of world service.

Background

Belief in feminine manifestations of God extends back to prehistory. But for many centuries, western religion discouraged this avenue to the divine and promoted a masculine deity in combination with patriarchal social norms. Things began to change in the mid-19th century, when a new awareness of the Divine Feminine developed. The same period witnessed the emergence of powerful women,

like Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891), Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910), Myrtle Page Fillmore (1845–1931), and Violet Mary Firth (1890–1946),¹ who launched major religious initiatives or became influential esoteric teachers. Many other women have followed in their footsteps.

The new awareness of the Divine Feminine and the emergence of these women teachers can scarcely be considered unrelated developments. This is not to say that all significant teachings on the Divine Feminine have come from women. Nor would it be true to say that the new awareness was simply an offshoot of the feminist movement; its scope has been considerably more general. Male authors have made major contributions, and large numbers of men have reported favorably on the expansion in their own awareness of the divine nature.

This article explores the work of two people—a woman and a man—whose contributions to our understanding of the Divine Feminine were particularly significant and reinforced and complemented each other. Helena Ivanovna Roerich (1879–1955) was born into a prominent Russian family. Spiritual experiences in her childhood years set her on a path that progressively expanded throughout her life. Her marriage to artist and writer Nicholas Roerich produced a most fruitful partnership. The Roerichs traveled to England, the United States, and most significantly to India and Ti-

About the Author

John F. Nash, Ph.D., is a long-time esoteric student, author and teacher. Two of his books, *Quest for the Soul* and *The Soul and Its Destiny*, were reviewed in the Winter 2005 issue of the *Esoteric Quarterly*. For more information see: www.uriel.com.

bet where they explored remote areas of the Himalayas.² During much of her life, Helena Roerich served as a channel for the Master Morya, chohan of the first ray, and together they produced the 17 *Agni Yoga* books that have greatly influenced modern esoteric studies. She also published three other books under pseudonyms and wrote numerous letters which have been preserved. In 1920 the Roerichs founded the Agni Yoga Society in New York City to promote the teachings but unlike the Arcane School founded three years later by Alice Ann Bailey (1880–1949) it never sought to become an esoteric school. Helena also established the Himalayan Institute of the Scientific Studies and served as honorary president. She died in Kalimpong, India, and her body was cremated according to Buddhist rites.

Geoffrey Hodson (1886–1983) was born in the United Kingdom to an upper-class family, attended private schools, and served as an army officer in World War I. But already in 1913, a lecture in Manchester by Annie Wood Besant (1847–1933), president of the Theosophical Society, inspired him to become a member. His association with the Society and the Esoteric School of Theosophy³ would dominate the next 70 years of his life. Even as a child he experienced expansions of consciousness that enabled him to see beyond the dense physical world. In due course this gift allowed him to carry out clairvoyant research, with particular emphasis on the devic kingdom, for which he became famous in esoteric circles. Hodson traveled widely through the Americas, India and Australia, finally making his home in New Zealand. During a long life, he had ongoing contacts with higher entities from both the human and the deva evolutions. Hodson gave frequent lectures and published many books and articles, but it was only with the posthumous publication of his occult diary: *Light of the Sanctuary*,⁴ that the extent of his contacts with higher beings became generally known.

Manifestations of the World Mother

Helena Roerich and Geoffrey Hodson both explored the feminine aspect of God in its role as the “World Mother” or “Mother of the

World.” The Mother is just one of the archetypes through which the Divine Feminine has manifested through the ages, others being the Virgin, Bride, Consort, and personification of Wisdom. However, the archetypes can manifest in combinations, and, as we shall see, the Divine Mother has often been perceived as a Virgin Mother.

Roerich’s and Hodson’s understanding of the Divine Feminine was clearly influenced by eastern religious and philosophical traditions. In part, this orientation reflected their familiarity with the teachings of the Theosophical Society. Roerich was not formally associated with the Society, but she translated Blavatsky’s *Secret Doctrine* and sections of the *Mahatma Letters* into Russian. Hodson’s extensive involvement in the Society has already been noted. The eastern orientation also derived from their own studies and personal experiences in Asia. Doubtless, both were aware of the work of Ramakrishna (1836–1886), 19th-century India’s best-known devotee of the World Mother in her role as Kali, consort of Shiva.

However, they did not hesitate to draw upon western traditions where it was appropriate to do so. In adult life, Roerich identified strongly with Buddhism; but as a young woman she may have been influenced by the long tradition of reverence to Sophia, the expression of Divine Wisdom, in the Russian Orthodox Church. Hodson always considered himself a Christian, and he was as comfortable with religious devotion as he was with esoteric philosophy. Although raised in the Church of England, he was eventually ordained in the Liberal Catholic Church, and he took his responsibilities as a priest very seriously.⁵

Hodson’s perception of the World Mother underwent considerable development during his long years of study, contemplation and clairvoyant research. Initially he perceived her as an abstract principle—one that generalized all the virtues he appreciated in human women. For example in 1941 he mused, almost as though he were writing romantic poetry:

Behind all womanhood exists the Eternal Woman, the one divine manifestation of

femininity... What are the essential qualities of the archetypal woman? They are sacrifice, tenderness, graciousness, divine radiance, heavenly fragrance, beauty, and grace. They are wisdom, fathomness as a still dark pool of infinite depth, profound compassion and intimate concern for all living things, ministration, healing love. They are joyous radiant girlhood, graceful womanhood, creative, preserving, and transforming motherhood. Within the Heavenly Woman is an ascetic refinement of utter purity.⁶

Later in life his image of the World Mother took more definite form, and he focused increasingly on her manifestations. However, from the start he recognized the necessity for cosmic balance and union between the feminine and the masculine: "At its origin," he wrote, the Eternal Woman "is cosmic, being the half of all creation. The other half is the Eternal Man, and mysteriously these are not two but one."⁷

Roerich and Hodson both emphasized that the World Mother has manifested in a variety of forms over the centuries and millennia. In Hodson's words: "The different visions and differing appearances and positions which people of various religions and countries attribute to the World Mother are all adaptations of visions and teachings chosen as most suitable."⁸

Roerich offered examples of such manifestations, including one that might seem to contrast with Hodson's litany of feminine virtues:

From time immemorial the Mother of the World has sent form to achievement. In the history of humanity, Her Hand traces an un-

breakable thread. On Sinai Her Voice rang out. She assumed the image of Kali. She was the basis of the cults of Isis and Ishtar.⁹

But Hodson agreed with Roerich about the Mother's manifestation as the Egyptian goddess Isis. In a devotional poem we find:

This is the Eternal Virgin, Isis, The Mother of all the World, the Cosmic Lotus, The Universal Womb from which all Worlds are born, In which they yet remain."¹⁰

Like all virgin goddesses, "Though ever She brings forth, She yet remains Immaculate." Hodson clearly recognized here that, as a divine archetype, virginity refers to the independent woman whose potential has not been channeled into a particular path, without regard to sexual experience or motherhood. It is worth noting that classical Latin distinguished between *virgo*, which captured the notion of female independence, from *virgo intacta*, which expressed the modern, everyday sense of virginity.¹¹

The classical Buddhist text known as the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* recognized the goddess Prajnaparamita as the mother of all Buddhas.¹² And a similar title was bestowed on the Tibetan Buddhist Tara. However, Roerich went further to assert that the World Mother was the spiritual mother of both the Buddha and the Christ:

I have already [mentioned] the Mother of Buddha and Christ. Indeed it is time to point out that the one Mother of both Lords is not a symbol but a great manifestation of the Feminine Origin, in which is revealed the spiritual Mother of Christ and Buddha.

Roerich's and Hodson's understanding of the Divine Feminine was clearly influenced by eastern religious and philosophical traditions. In part, this orientation reflected their familiarity with the teachings of the Theosophical Society ... The eastern orientation also derived from their own studies and personal experiences in Asia. Doubtless, both were aware of the work of Ramakrishna, 19th-century India's best-known devotee of the World Mother.

She it was Who taught and ordained Them for achievement.¹³

Reappearance of the Mother

Manifestations of the World Mother may have occurred throughout history, but they have not always been exoteric. Roerich explained that the events that resulted in the destruction of Atlantis disrupted the pattern of manifestation, and by necessity the Mother became veiled:

After Atlantis, when a blow was inflicted upon the cult of the spirit, the Mother began to weave a new thread, which will now begin to radiate. After Atlantis the Mother of the World veiled Her Face and forbade the pronouncement of Her Name.¹⁴

It seems as though the Mother's withdrawal from public view mirrored the withdrawal of the masters from overt participation in human affairs.¹⁵ However, the time was now coming—in the 1920s—when the veil would be lifted once again, and the Mother of the World would play a more conspicuous role in human affairs. In *Leaves of Morya's Garden*, Roerich proclaimed the beginning of a new epoch, heralded by the approach of a star referred to as "Urusvati":

Since long ago [this star] has been the symbol of the Mother of the World, and the Epoch of the Mother of the World must begin at the time of Her star's unprecedented approach to the Earth. The Great Epoch is beginning... A Great Epoch! I rejoice so much.¹⁶

"Sister Urusvati" appears throughout the Agni Yoga teachings, usually in the context of an overshadowing presence, without reference to a star. But in the mid-1930s we learned that the "star of the Mother of the World" had been the Planet Venus that came unusually close to the Earth in 1924. Be that as it may, "Many feminine movements were kindled by [the star's] powerful rays."¹⁷

Actually Roerich's new epoch had already begun on a small scale. During the late-19th century Mary Baker Eddy began using the now-

popular invocation "Father-Mother God." And in 1909 a statement by the presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints confirmed that Joseph Smith had privately taught that there is a heavenly mother as well as a heavenly father.¹⁸

However, the pace of developments accelerated after 1924. Within three years of *Leaves'* publication, Annie Besant declared March 24, the traditional feast of the Annunciation, to be World Mother Day.¹⁹ And the same year, fellow Theosophist Charles Webster Leadbeater (1847–1934) published an important, systematized work in which he considered the Mother both as an entity, more or less anthropomorphized, and as a cosmic principle. The cosmic principle is *mūlaprakriti* (Sanskrit: मूलप्रकृति, literally "root of nature"): "that from which matter emerges when spirit ensouls it." In Leadbeater's words:

The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters of space; but the waters of space are divine in their making just as much as the Spirit that moves upon them, because there is nothing but God anywhere.²⁰

Beauty and Joy

For Helena Roerich, the Mother expresses both love and beauty. Indeed these two are inextricably linked:

Can one love a garden and despise its flowers? Can one worship the power of beauty and not show respect for love? I attest that the Power adorning Our Universe is confirmed as Our Mother of the World—the Feminine Origin!... Truly the Feminine Origin is most beautiful!²¹

Elsewhere we find: "We see the radiance of the Mother of the World!"²² And: "The Lights of the Mother of the World resemble the pillars of the aurora borealis."²³ The beauty and radiance of the Mother of the World recall the depiction of the Shekinah of esoteric Judaism as the Glory of God.²⁴ Roerich's experience also recalls the account of an ecstatic vision of Sophia by the Russian philosopher and mystic Vladimir Soloviev (1853–1900). Soloviev awoke to a scent of roses, exclaiming:

I saw all and all was one.
 One alone in the image of female beauty
 The immeasurable within its measure
 Thou alone, before me, in me.²⁵

Geoffrey Hodson also emphasized the beauty of “the Mother Goddess.” No artistic representation can do her justice, but her true beauty can be perceived by those with eyes to see:

None of [her representations], even the most beautiful Madonna statue or picture, really portrays the... World Mother, Who nevertheless, responds to and permits Herself to be seen in forms acceptable and helpful to those who are accorded the appropriate vision.²⁶

Similarly, he commented that Isis “was a glorious and beautiful female Adept.”²⁷

Roerich commented on the World Mother’s “playfulness,” a concept not unknown in the East but foreign to customarily dour western religion. In a passage that calls to mind Rogers and Hammerstein’s Maria in “The Sound of Music”:

Rejoice in the Great Play of the Mother of the World!... She beckons to Her children from far-distant fields: “Hasten, children! I wish to teach you. I have keen eyes and alert ears ready for you. Sit ye down upon My garment. Let us learn to soar!”²⁸

Elsewhere she stressed that success at the human level is to be achieved through joy, a joy that reflects that at divine levels:

The play of the Mother of the World is in joy. She enfolds the enlightened ones in Her veil of joy. Rejoice amidst flowers; and in the midst of snow—equally redolent—also rejoice!²⁹

Roerich warns that “woman is the personification of self-sacrifice”³⁰ and that the same is true of the World Mother. However, joy can still come from right aspiration:

How beautiful is the Image of the Mother of the World! So much beauty, self-renunciation and tragedy is in this majestic Image! Aspire in your heart to the Highest, and joy and exultation will enter your soul.³¹

Duality and Trinity

A challenge to studies of the Divine Feminine, particularly in Christianity, has always been to reconcile a feminine aspect with the trinity. For example, the Russian Orthodox theologian Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944) was warned by religious superiors that his work on Sophia threatened to undermine trinitarian doctrine.

Bulgakov was forced to explain that Sophia is not a fourth person of the trinity but the “nonhypostatic essence” of God: “The Holy Trinity is consubstantial and indivisible. The three persons... have one life in common, that is, one Oursia, one Sophia.”³²

However, Helena Roerich boldly asserted that the Mother is a divine hypostasis and aspect of the trinity: “The Mother of the Universe, or of the manifested Cosmos, can be accepted as one of the Figures of the Holy

Hodson’s perception of the World Mother underwent considerable development during his long years of study, contemplation and clairvoyant research. Initially he perceived her as an abstract principle—one that generalized all the virtues he appreciated in human women... Later in life his image of the World Mother took more definite form, and he focused increasingly on her manifestations. However, from the start he recognized the necessity for cosmic balance and union between the feminine and the masculine.

Trinity.”³³ She went on to identify this “Figure” and to place her assertion in a historical context:

[T]here is no religion, except later ecclesiastical Christianity, in which the Feminine Element is not included among the Primates of Be-ness. Thus, the Gnostics also considered the Holy Ghost as a Feminine Element. In the most ancient Teachings, the manifested Trinity of Father, Mother, and Son was considered as an emanation of the highest, eternally hidden Cause.³⁴

Roerich evidently knew that the earliest formulation of a Christian trinitarian doctrine, by Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch (c. 117–c. 181 CE), identified Sophia as the third person of the trinity.

Roerich also detected triplicity within the Divine Feminine itself. Referring to the Mahayana Buddhist Tara, she claimed that three “facets of cosmic fire can be seen on the Tara by a sensitive eye.” Moreover, “These facets are so powerfully revealed that their radiance melts all discovered obstacles.”³⁵ Similarly, Geoffrey Hodson depicted the cosmic Isis as a triune goddess, expressing Nephthys, Hathor, and Isis herself in manifest form.³⁶ Furthermore, this feminine triplicity extends down functionally to the most fundamental levels of creation:

Isis represents, in her cosmic aspect, the threefold spiritual essence of *Prakriti*. She is a triple Goddess, a queen to represent the positive, a woman to represent the negative, and a mother to represent the conjoined pair... As Isis in the Cosmos, meaning the soul of the Great Deep—with its triple powers of self-reproduction, positive, negative, and neutral—was and is represented by mighty *Dhyan Chohans*, so at each lower level, down to the planetary *Aditi-Akasha*, an Adept Official undertakes the task of directing the manifestation of the Triple Feminine current in the creative life and activity in and on a planet.³⁷

Hodson explains *Dhyan Chohans* as “members of the Host of Spiritual Beings Who... supervise the cyclic evolution of life and form in a Solar System.”³⁸ *Akasha* (आकाश), which

forms a fifth element in eastern philosophy, complementing earth, water, air and fire, is considered to be the spiritual essence that pervades the universe. By prefixing it with *Aditi* (Sanskrit: अदिती, literally “unlimited”), he was emphasizing its sacredness. Aditi, whom Hodson describes as “the Mother Goddess,” was originally a Vedic sky-goddess.

Prakriti (प्रकृति, “nature”) is usually taken to be the undifferentiated matter from which the universe was created.³⁹ In relating the World Mother to matter or nature, Hodson drew upon precedents in many religious and philosophical systems. The Latin word for mother, *mater*, is directly linked etymologically to “matter” and “matrix.” Spirit is masculine in polarity, while matter or form is feminine; but matter is not to be regarded as separate from the divine. In Roerich’s words:

[S]pirit and matter are one... The manifest Universe, visible and invisible, from the highest to the lowest, reveals to us the infinite aspects of Radiant Matter. Where there is no matter, there is no life.⁴⁰

However, juxtaposing the masculine against the feminine, spirit against matter, explores not a trinitarian structure but a divine duality which may or may not be compatible with models of a triune deity.⁴¹ The main theological issue relating to the Divine Feminine may not be to fit the feminine aspect into the trinity but to reconcile the triune and the dualistic manifestations of the Godhead.

Elsewhere, Geoffrey Hodson related the Divine Feminine to the universal feminine energy of *Kundalini* (Sanskrit: कुण्डलिनी). The “Universal *Kundalini*,” he explains

is the manifestation or incarnation of the feminine generative interior “faculty” of the Logos, or Second Aspect—yes, feminine if your wish, though of course far beyond such divisions, being *arupa* [i.e., formless] in this universal aspect of its expression.

The World Mother [is] very sacred indeed. She is to be revered most deeply and humbly, wondrous One as She is and not only in religious personifications as a celestial Personage, but as a universally creative *Kun-*

dalini-manifestation of the Logos with which She is ever identified.⁴²

The Virgin Mary

The closest Christianity has come to legitimizing worship of the Divine Feminine is veneration of the Virgin Mary. In a somewhat confusing statement of doctrine she was said to be the Mother of God, but not herself divine.⁴³ Nevertheless, devotion to Mary within the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches has remained strong since the Middle Ages, no doubt tapping into an unspoken need for a goddess. With the Theosophical Society's "christianization" in the early 20th century, its teachers turned their attention to Mary, and this trend continued and expanded in the Liberal Catholic Church to which many of them belonged.

Geoffrey Hodson often identified the World Mother with the Virgin Mary. He approved of traditional Catholic titles—some of which were borrowed from Isis—such as "Queen of the Angels" and "Star of the Sea." And he described a vision of Mary thus: "At this point, the Blessed Lady Mary becomes visible before me in all Her wondrous blue and, as it were, reaches out and touches my head."⁴⁴ Hodson insisted that no artistic depiction can adequately represent the Mother, but he offered two paintings that captured his own observations.⁴⁵ Both resemble traditional representations of Mary. He confessed that he was drawn to the Madonna image, "a realisation of the Mother-Love of God," although he acknowledged the comparable roles of Kwan

Yin, Isis, Ishtar, Parvati and other mother goddesses.⁴⁶

Hodson gave the Virgin Mary a far more exalted status than did mainstream Christianity, but he embraced traditional affirmations of Mary's compassionate, nurturing role:

The Blessed Lady Mary, incarnation of the Maternal Spirit of the Godhead, moved by purest compassion and love, holds the whole of humanity in Her arms and at Her breast, nourishing it with spiritualizing like for the purpose of quickening the evolution of all sentient beings.⁴⁷

Helena Roerich boldly asserted that that the Mother is a divine hypostasis and aspect of the trinity: "The Mother of the Universe, or of the manifested Cosmos, can be accepted as one of the Figures of the Holy Trinity"... Roerich evidently knew that the earliest formulation of a Christian trinitarian doctrine by Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, identified Sophia as the third person of the trinity.

He saw Mary overseeing the gestation and birthing processes not only in the human but also in the animal kingdom. In his clairvoyant studies of human pregnancies he observed the myriads of building devas constructing the embryo.⁴⁸ And he realized that these devas were "agents of a great Intelligence which presides over and directs all maternal processes throughout Nature... the Feminine or Mother Aspect of the Deity, of which She is a manifestation and a representative."⁴⁹

Hodson also recognized the special role of the World Mother in "birthing" in the more symbolic sense:

She also is present and helps to bring about the mystical "birth" of the Christ consciousness within the Inner Self of every Initiate when admitted to membership of the Great White Brotherhood.⁵⁰

Significantly, the first initiation is customarily referred to as "the birth."⁵¹

Adept and Archangel

Both Helena Roerich and Geoffrey Hodson asserted that the Mother has manifested in a variety of forms throughout history. Hodson clarified how this occurred by stating that the “World Mother” should not be considered an *entity* so much as an exalted office which various entities may hold in different places and at different times. In particular: “That Official is the World

Mother for a planet and a period... There is such a Being, there is such an Official, and Mary the mother of Jesus now holds that Office, as Isis held it in earlier days.”⁵² And: “As far as my understanding and experiences inform me, the Blessed Lady Mary, Mother of Jesus, is the present Holder of that Office [of World Mother].”⁵³

Popular Catholic devotion has long depicted the Virgin Mary as Queen of the Angels. And Charles Leadbeater had referred to the World Mother as “a mighty Angel, having under Her a vast host of subordinate Angels whom She keeps perpetually employed in the work which is especially committed to Her.”⁵⁴ Hodson took up the same theme, describing the Mother as an archangel and a senior member of the Planetary Hierarchy:

The planetary World Mother is conceived... as a highly-evolved Archangel Representative and Embodiment on earth of the Feminine Aspect of the Deity. She is also thought of as an Adept Official in the Inner Government of the World, in whom all the highest qualities of womanhood and motherhood shine forth in their fullest perfection.⁵⁵

However, Hodson departed from traditional Christian teachings by relating the World Mother to the Lord of the World, *Sanat Kumara*. The “Queen of the Angels, World Mother, Our Lady, [is in relationship and collaboration] with the Lord of the World—in what might be called, if one may so presume, His femininity-functions, extremely delicate and refined as they are in every kingdom.”⁵⁶ Here, Hodson was affirming the kind of masculine-feminine duality

referred to earlier; but he identified the duality specifically with the relationship between the human and deva evolutions.⁵⁷

Feminine entities, equivalent to the World Mother, are not confined to our world. Hodson regarded her as a member of a hierarchy of entities to which he refers by the eastern term *Maha-Devis* or “Great Devas.” Some of these entities are more powerful than our Mother. For example, there are Maha-Devis associated with the Logoi of star systems, like our own: “Supra-planetary *Maha-Devis* fulfil the same Office for groups of planets in

a Solar System.”⁵⁸ “Divine Mother” evidently can be a more comprehensive term than “World Mother.”

Hodson related how the “Adept Isis”

took the whole Egyptian nation under Her charge, and for at least 10,000 years guarded and inspired its progress and development from birth to death. She was a very wonderful Being Who has now gone to higher spheres of Buddhahood.⁵⁹

In describing Isis in this manner he was asserting that there are, or have in the past been, fe-

Hodson acknowledged the intriguing possibility that a human woman could evolve not only to the level of adept but eventually to become the World Mother. Such an entity “becomes an *Avatara* for the feminine, or negative, polarity of the Logos”... On the one hand, Isis, the Virgin Mary and others are viewed as... divine incarnations; on the other Hodson saw the World Mother as a position that could be attained through the evolution of human consciousness.

male adepts, a view that is still not held by all esoteric teachers. Moreover, the suggestion that Isis became a buddha is, to say the least, evocative. Among other things it demonstrates Hodson's skill in transferring concepts among different esoteric traditions.

We saw that, in his early years, Hodson viewed the Divine Feminine as a principle expressed through the virtues of human women. Later, he expanded this vision to a more definite link between the World Mother and women everywhere:

In the holder of the divine Office of World Mother, a conscious union occurs between the archetypal woman fully manifest in the woman Adept and the cosmic principle of womanhood... The potentiality of this hypostatic union exists in every woman... This is in part the mystery of womanhood, this is the secret life of every woman, that on occasion she knows and is one with the Eternal Woman and has her mysterious life in that realm wherein She abides.⁶⁰

Perhaps because of this link, Hodson acknowledged the intriguing possibility that a human woman could evolve not only to the level of adept but eventually to become the World Mother. Such an entity "becomes as an *Avatara* for the feminine, or negative, polarity of the Logos and the power, life, and currents of divine Breath and divine Life-Force of *Kundalini*."⁶¹ Here we have an interesting juxtaposition of ideas. On the one hand, Isis, the Virgin Mary and others are viewed as *avatars*, or divine incarnations; on the other Hodson saw the World Mother as a position that could be attained through the evolution of human consciousness. Somehow these two concepts—one "top-down," the other "bottom-up"—must be resolved. A similar issue arises in connection with the Christ.

The Legacy

Helena Roerich declared that a new epoch of interest in the feminine aspects of deity was about to begin, and Geoffrey Hodson's work certainly helped fulfill that prophecy. Much more has also been accomplished. The field of feminist theology has blossomed, even

though the focus has been more on Sophia than on the World Mother; and the Virgin Mary has generally been ignored.

On the other hand, the frequency of reported apparitions of Mary has increased dramatically. A worldwide total of 378 apparitions was reported between 1925 and 1999, compared with only 14, including the famous series at Fatima, Portugal, from 1900 to 1925.⁶² A small sample of the apparitions are those at Beauraing, Belgium, in 1932; Heede-im-Emsland, Germany, in 1937; Tre Fontane, Italy, in 1947; Syracuse, Italy, in 1953; Akita, Japan, in 1969; San Sebastian de Garabandal, Spain, in the 1960s; Betania, Venezuela, in 1976; Chiang Si, China, in 1978; Kibeho, Rwanda, in 1981; Phoenix, Arizona, in 1988; and Marpingen, Germany, in 1999.⁶³ Whatever judgments are made about their validity, these apparitions attest to the intensity of contemporary devotion to the Virgin Mary. In recognition of this devotion Pope Pius XII proclaimed that Christ had crowned his mother Queen of Heaven and designated May 31 to be the feast of Mary's Queenship.⁶⁴

More directly relevant to the World Mother has been the work of mystic and environmental activist Andrew Harvey. For him the Divine Feminine has passionate immediacy, and he seeks to be her disciple of action. The Mother is rooted in Hindu, Buddhist, Tao, Sufi and Christian tradition, but now she is calling people of all religious persuasions to this area of world service: "In our growing, expanding imagination ... we come to understand more and more what the feminine force could do and how we could work with it to save our planet."⁶⁵ Roerich had issued her own call to action more than 60 years earlier, affirming: "In the hands of women lies the salvation of humanity and of our planet."⁶⁶ Now, the question is not whether women should get involved but how many women and men will work together in a collective, global effort.

The goddess Kali has often been considered a disturbingly negative image; however, she has a sizeable following in India. Moreover, Roerich saw a transformation: "Kali, the Destroyer, has become Mother, the Creator."⁶⁷ Harvey retains elements of both the negative

and the positive image. Kali, he perceives, is angry at the environmental threat to the planet and humanity's hesitation in responding to it. But this is not the anger of a vengeful god:

There is nothing punitive... in the Mother's anger. Her rage is a summons to attention, a shaking of her children so that they... wake up, a shaking that can seem—and be—very violent, but which is always in the service of liberation and deeper knowledge and the outpouring into action of a galvanized love.⁶⁸

Hodson wrote of the World Mother's role in birthing the Christ consciousness. Andrew Harvey speaks of the birthing of a new world order of environmental and social harmony, calling us all to serve as "midwives."⁶⁹

Many books and articles have explored eastern concepts of the World Mother. After centuries in which worship was circumscribed in the West, it is not surprising that many people turned to eastern traditions to find her. But other authors besides Harvey have approached the subject using western idioms,⁷⁰ and many more can be expected.

Awareness of and interest in the Divine Feminine continues to increase, and people evidently find the archetype of the Mother particularly meaningful. One measure of the demand for information and insights is the number of Internet websites concerned with the Divine Mother: 79,600 in a recent count. When Helena Roerich began her work, awareness in the west was minimal, but her own work and that of Geoffrey Hodson compensated richly. From the accumulated wisdom of the past as well as new revelation, we are building a new understanding of the divine nature, tapping into new expressions of divinity, and finding new opportunities for action relevant to our times.

¹ Firth wrote under the pseudonym of "Dion Fortune," a corruption of *Deo non fortuna*, her initiatory name in the Society of the Golden Dawn.

² References to their expeditions appear in Nicholas Roerich's *Shambhala: In Search of a New Era*. Inner Traditions, 1930.

³ At times the Esoteric School was known as the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society.

⁴ Sandra Hodson (ed). *Light of the Sanctuary: The Occult Diary of Geoffrey Hodson*. Theosophical Publishers, 1988.

⁵ The Liberal Catholic Church was an offshoot of the Old Catholic Church which claims apostolic succession but split from Rome in the late 19th century over the doctrine of papal infallibility. Theosophist Charles Webster Leadbeater (1847–1934), whom Hodson met a number of times, served as the Church's second presiding bishop.

⁶ Sandra Hodson (ed). *Light of the Sanctuary*. Theosophical Publishers, 1988, pp. 81-82. Throughout this article, quotes are attributed to the authors; however, in many cases the authors were serving as amanuenses for higher entities.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ S. Hodson. *Light of the Sanctuary*, p. 284.

⁹ Helena I. Roerich. *Leaves of Morya's Garden*, II, 8, 11. Agni Yoga Society, 1925, p. 69. In traditional Hindu art, Kali was portrayed dancing on the chest of her husband Shiva. She carried a sword in one hand and a severed head in the other. Her earrings were dead bodies, her necklace was made of human skulls, and she wore a girdle of dead men's hands. Her eyes were red, her tongue thrust out from her mouth, and her face and breasts were covered with blood.

¹⁰ Geoffrey Hodson. *Illuminations of the Mystery Tradition*. Theosophical Publishing House, 1992, p. 71

¹¹ Portrayal of *Virgo Maria* (the "Virgin Mary") as sexless has all the markings of a deliberate confusion of the terms by the church fathers to produce a suitable feminine ideal for institutionalized Christianity.

¹² Buddhahood was always regarded as an advanced stage of spiritual attainment: enlightenment. Prince Gautama, whom we refer to as "the Buddha," was the last of a long lineage of buddhas.

¹³ Roerich. *Leaves of Morya's Garden*, II, 8, 11, pp. 68-69.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁵ See for example: Alice A. Bailey. *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*. Lucis Publishing Co., 1957, p. 519.

¹⁶ Roerich. *Leaves of Morya's Garden*, II, 4, 11, p. 36

¹⁷ Helena I. Roerich. "Star of the Mother of the World." *Letters of Helena I. Roerich*. Agni Yoga Society, 11 January 1935.

- ¹⁸ Joseph F. Smith et al. "The Origin of Man." *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1909, p. 80.
- ¹⁹ Annie W. Besant. "The New Annunciation." Insert in *The Theosophist*, vol. 49, June 1928.
- ²⁰ Charles W. Leadbeater. *The World-Mother as Symbol and Fact*. Theosophical Publishing House, 1928, pp. 53-54.
- ²¹ Helena I. Roerich. *Infinity*, I, 154. Agni Yoga Society, 1930, pp. 133-134. See also: *Leaves of Morya's Garden*, II, 8, 12, p. 69.
- ²² Helena I. Roerich. *Hierarchy*, 4. Agni Yoga Society, 1931, p. 12.
- ²³ Helena I. Roerich. *Fiery World*, II, 424. Agni Yoga Society, 1934, p. 81.
- ²⁴ See for example: John Nash. "Shekinah: the Immanent Glory of God." *Esoteric Quarterly*, Summer 2005, pp. xxx.
- ²⁵ Vladimir Soloviev. "The Three Meetings." Quoted in: Eugenia Gourvitch. *Vladimir Soloviev: the Man and the Prophet*. Rudolf Steiner Press, 1992, pp. 34, 36. Soloviev really did turn to romantic poetry in his lifelong devotion to the Divine Feminine.
- ²⁶ S. Hodson. *Light of the Sanctuary*, p. 284.
- ²⁷ Geoffrey Hodson. *Illuminations of the Mystery Tradition*. Theosophical Publishing House, 1992, p. 71.
- ²⁸ Helena I. Roerich. *Agni Yoga*, 20, 60. Agni Yoga Society, 1929, pp. 20, 45.
- ²⁹ Helena I. Roerich. *Fiery World*, I, 663. Agni Yoga Society, 1933.
- ³⁰ Helena I. Roerich. "Mother of the World." *Letters of Helena I. Roerich*. Agni Yoga Society, p. 456.
- ³¹ *Ibid*, p. 372.
- ³² Sergei Bulgakov. *Sophia: the Wisdom of God*. (Transl: Patrick Thompson, O. Fielding Clarke, & Xenia Braikевич.) Lindisfarne Press, 1993, pp. 35-37. The Greek word *hypostasis* is translated into English as "person," as in "person of the trinity." *Oursia* captures the notion of divine essence or substance.
- ³³ Helena I. Roerich. "Mother of the Universe." *Letters of Helena I. Roerich*. Agni Yoga Society, 9 January 1935
- ³⁴ *Ibid*.
- ³⁵ Roerich. *Infinity*, I, 201, p. 167.
- ³⁶ G. Hodson. *Illuminations of the Mystery Tradition*, p. 71.
- ³⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 69-70.
- ³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 274, 281.
- ³⁹ *Prakriti* and *mūlaprakriti*, have similar meanings and are often taken to be synonymous. However, *mūla* means "root of," suggesting that *mūlaprakriti* is a more fundamental essence of matter.
- ⁴⁰ Roerich. "Mother of the Universe," p. 373.
- ⁴¹ John Nash. *The Trinity and Its Symbolism*. *Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2005, pp. 33-46.
- ⁴² S. Hodson. *Light of the Sanctuary*, p. 419.
- ⁴³ In 431CE the Council of Ephesus declared that Mary was *Theotokos* (Greek: θεοτοκος), the Mother of God "in the true sense of the word." But the church insisted that, to quote the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, she only merited "homage infinitely below that paid to God."
- ⁴⁴ S. Hodson. *Light of the Sanctuary*, p. 418.
- ⁴⁵ Geoffrey Hodson. *The Kingdom of the Gods*. Theosophical Publishing House, 1952, plates 28, 29.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 244.
- ⁴⁷ S. Hodson. *Light of the Sanctuary*, p. 414.
- ⁴⁸ Geoffrey Hodson. *The Miracle of Birth*. Quest Books, 1981.
- ⁴⁹ Hodson. *The Kingdom of the Gods*, p. 242.
- ⁵⁰ S. Hodson. *Light of the Sanctuary*, p. 415.
- ⁵¹ See for example: John Nash. *The Soul and Its Destiny*. Authorhouse, 2004, pp. 245-246.
- ⁵² G. Hodson. *Illuminations of the Mystery Tradition*, p. 70.
- ⁵³ S. Hodson. *Light of the Sanctuary*, p. 355.
- ⁵⁴ Leadbeater. *The World-Mother as Symbol and Fact*, p. 4.
- ⁵⁵ G. Hodson. *The Kingdom of the Gods*, p. 244.
- ⁵⁶ S. Hodson. *Light of the Sanctuary*, p. 355.
- ⁵⁷ See also: Alice A. Bailey. *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*. Lucis Publishing Co., 1925, p. 91.
- ⁵⁸ S. Hodson. *Light of the Sanctuary*, p. 355.
- ⁵⁹ G. Hodson. *Illuminations of the Mystery Tradition*, p. 71.
- ⁶⁰ S. Hodson. *Light of the Sanctuary*, p. 82.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 222.
- ⁶² Source: International Marian Research Institute, Dayton, Ohio, 2005.
- ⁶³ *Ibid*.
- ⁶⁴ Pius XII. Encyclical *Ad Caeli Reginam*, Vatican, 1954.
- ⁶⁵ Andrew Harvey. *The Return of the Mother*. Tarcher/Putnam, 1995, p. 32.
- ⁶⁶ Helena I. Roerich. "Woman as Mother of the World." *Letters of Helena I. Roerich*. Agni Yoga Society, 1929.
- ⁶⁷ Roerich. *Agni Yoga*, 142, p. 92..
- ⁶⁸ Harvey. *The Return of the Mother*, p. 34.
- ⁶⁹ Andrew Harvey. "The Return of the Divine Feminine." Lecture, University of Creation Spirituality, 2002. Harvey has given numerous lectures on the same theme.

⁷⁰ For example: Donald L. Gelpi. *The World mother*. University Press of America, 1984; Wendy. Scott. *Meet World mother*. Gold Fire Press, 1999; Francis X. Clooney. *World mother, Blessed Mother: Hindu Goddesses And The Virgin Mary*. Oxford University Press, 2004.