

Significance of black madonna

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Notwithstanding its sociological, historical, literary and religious significance to the life of many people in different parts of the world, the origin and essence of the Black Madonna which serves as the holy icon of the Virgin Mary and Poland's national symbol remains to be a debate to many people as far as the history, literature and religion are concerned. The presence of Black Madonna are widespread all across the country and they are mostly found inside the churches and cathedrals and they all point towards the image of Mary and the Christ.

This image may have been formed centuries ago but its historical significance and importance travelled and withstood the test of time. The word Madonna originated from Italy which means "our lady". This term connotes a title of respect for the Virgin Mary and it is often applied to works of art, most especially to the mother and child image which is popularly known as Madonna and Child. Religion tells that Black Madonna is the representation of the image of Virgin Mary which was tested by times that is why it was transformed into its today's black image.

Also, church leaders claim that Black Madonna has nothing to do with the culture of the African-Americans. It is stated, nevertheless, that the Black Madonnas became black they were greatly influenced by the cultures and traditions of the Black Americans. The icon transformed into black because it was affected by the place where most of these images can be found. On the other hand, history and literature dictate that Black Madonna is the changed representation of the early statues of the African Goddess Isis and her son Horus which greatly influenced most of the religions of the world today.

Society has associated the color black with something negative but in the past, this was not the case. For instance, black was connected with fertility and growth and it is good to think of it not as a color but as an absence of color. From this perspective, the Black Madonna became an icon for inclusion. She became a guide and a comfort for people from all walks of life and race. In terms of psychology, darkness represents something unknown to consciousness and more often than not, these gifts involve qualities of the females like intuition and emotion.

It must be born in mind that the term feminine does not necessarily refer to the female species because both sexes have masculine and feminine qualities. With this in mind, it can be said that the Black Madonnas symbolize transformation because this image helps people discover their inner gifts and assists them in bringing those gifts into the surface. Amid these numerous explanations from the different perspectives in the society, until today, there are no clear and definite position on the real origin of the Black Madonna which is believed to be the representation of Virgin Mary.

Even though the different claims seem to contradict each other with regards to the origin of the icon or image, the Black Madonna is considered to be one of the most influential religious icons to most of the people in the present generation. The origin of Black Madonna A Black Madonna may refer to an icon, painting, fresco or sculpture of Virgin Mary which is usually found in churches, sanctuaries and chapels. It is also called as Black Virgin since Mary is portrayed with dark or black skin.

Some believe that this portrayal of Virgin Mary was originated from the culture of the Black Americans since many of these Black Madonnas were

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found in the areas with large black populations such as in the United States. Some claim that the color of these images have no significance or value since they were only repainted by black color after being restored to its original pale-skinned coloring brought by the age of time. Nevertheless, amidst its sociological, historical and religious significance to many parts of the world, the origin of the Black Madonna still remains a question left unanswered to many of its devotees.

Some of the famous Black Virgin shrines, which we usually see in the cathedrals and churches, are Loreto, Zaragoza, Chartes, Rocamadour, Guadalupe and Montserrat . Black Madonnas are found throughout the world including Belgium, Croatia, Ecuador, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Mexico, Poland, Romania, Sicily, Spain, Switzerland and the United States . The first “ Black Madonna and Child” portraits and statues were believed to be from Isis and Horus . Isis was a black African goddess from Nile Valley civilizations whose worship diffused to most of ancient civilizations.

Before the first Egyptian dynasty, Isis was worshiped by the Nubians for more than 300 years. It is believed that Isis religion had a lot of similarities to the to the world's religions which include Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity. For instance, Horus, the son of Isis, was from a virgin mother's immaculate conception and said to walk on water like Jesus Christ. The husband of Isis named Osiris was also resurrected, like Jesus, after he was murdered. When other religions became popular, the “ Black Madonna and Child” statues of Isis and Horus were not destroyed but their names were only changed.

For example, Isis and Horus were changed to Devaki and Krishna in Hinduism or Maya and Buddha in Buddhism. The Japanese called Isis as Kwannon while Chinese changed the name to Kwa-yin. In the 1985 book of Ean Begg entitled *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, there were 450 identified images of the Black Virgin and Child in Europe with 190 statues in France only. Because of the dominating influence of the Isis religion, it is believed that the African goddess had significant contributions to the civilization of the continent.

For instance, Paris is actually believed to be named after Isis since Para-Isis signifies "Place of Isis". Likewise, Notre Dame which means "Our Lady" is a manifestation that the cathedral of the Catholics is nothing but more than an enlargement of the temple of Isis in the ancient civilizations. Some also believe that Black Virgin, aside from its resemblance to the portrayal of Isis and Horus of the ancient Egyptians, has the strong connection to the medieval Knights Templar and Mary Magdalene.

For instance, the famous Black Virgin - la Madone des Fenestres which means "The Madonna of the Windows" was believed to have folk traditional significance since the place where this statue was believed to be a place where many Templars were massacred. Some associate Black Madonnas with African-American cultures. Nevertheless, church literature strongly denies this claim since church officials insist that the Madonnas became black because of the smoke from candles and dirt and eventually because of the old age of the statues.

Meanwhile, the Black Madonna in Southern Provençal tradition is associated with the patron of the Gypsies called St. Lara. The patron saint is considered to be the black assistant who accompanied the three Marys to France when

they escaped from the Holy Land after Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, during 1934, an icon of the Virgin Mother and Child was brought to the Pauline monastery of Jasna Gora or the “ Bright Mountain” in Western Poland. The icon was said to be donated by the Prince of Opole in Silesia. Some told that the icon was painted by St. Luke on boards from table of the Holy Family in Nazareth.

And the face of the said icon is black . There are other countless theories about the origin of the Black Madonnas or Black Virgins but until today, there is no concrete explanation about the history or origin of the now famous image in the religious sectors of the world. There are many who look at Black Madonna in relation to some of the goddesses known to men like Kali of India, Hecate and Medusa of Greece and Isis of Egypt. These grounds generate a spiritual as well as a psychological substance that raises the Black Madona to a level of great importance and significance in the modern world .

Today, the statues of Isis and Horus are now called Mary and Jesus and there are millions of pilgrims who are visiting the Black Madonna shrines since they are believed to be miraculous to the devotees. Some claim that the statues can help heal towns of plague, make infertile women pregnant, bring back dead babies to life, save countries from war and the like. One of the obvious testimonies of the miracle from the Black Virgin in Poland was the experience of Pope John Paul II when he prayed to the statue for his recovery from his gun shot wound .

After the miracle happened to Pope John Paul II, several miraculous events were credited after the Black Virgins including saving Poland from Russia in 1769. In fact, in 1968, the Black Madonna shrine in Poland received over 66,
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000 thank you letters for healing and other miraculous events . The meaning of Black Madonna Theories about the definition of darkness of the figure and mystery behind the dark image have been established everywhere. What Black Madonna represents is not an easy question to answer.

There is a tendency that one answer may lead to several more questions which demand plenty more explanations. One of the possible reasons for this dilemma lies in the difficulty of consciously incorporating the feminine aspect of life in a particular culture and most especially, a darker side of it. Another reason is the characteristic and nature of the dark feminine itself which clearly defies any attempt to generate limits as to what she really represents. However, no matter what many people may say and observe, the Black Madonna mirrors herself in the personal as well as collective lives of the people.

This dark side generates intimations to the most essential of meanings through the use of images, literature, works of arts and evendreams. It is noteworthy to mention that the word black can be a misnomer for some of the Madonnas because not all of them are color black in its literal sense, some of them are painted with different shades of black. The original artists of many Black Madonnas are lost in time but most people know that the most powerful representations of the Black Madonna were made during the 11th and 12th centuries.

The Shrines of the Black Madonnas are often located in the seat of great power and in the locations where the earth emits energies. From a religious perspective, the Black Madonna represents the honor and devotion of the female form. Christ, the center of Christianity is a male and it was from Mary
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that the church found a representative of the female specie towards divinity . Theories about the meaning of Black Madonna are often connected to the image of pre-Christian ideas and their religions.

Because the Madonna and Child looks like the Egyptian images of Isis and Horus, there is a possibility that the dark skin of the Black Madonnas may be a referene to the Egyptian roots of the image. The Dark-Skinned madoonas may likewise be based on other pre-Christian figures. There are also other theories that the Black Madonnas were made as a representation of a mother or a feminine figure by using earthly tones. This theory suggests that the light-skinned Madonnas depict purity and chastity while another theory holds that the Black Madonnas were intended to bea historically accurate imageof a Semitic woman from the Middle East named Mary.

There are some historians who said that the Black Madonnas were conceptualized after Middle Ages because during these times, the light-skinned images were the norm but regardless of what the case maybe, the Black Madonnas captured the attention of believers and non-believers for centuries . During the Victorian society, there was a time when the black female writers seemed to lean towards binding their female characters in an image of chastity because they want to overcomea heritage of concubinage.

The women then were portrayed as either a martyr or a saint and in the attempt of the writers such as Harriet Jacobs and Frances Harper to remove the stereotype of a sinful woman, they robbed the personalities of their characters of their sexual identity thereby makingthem pure and holy much like the Virgin Mary. This situation combined with the gender dilemma becomes a double jeopardy. According to Faith Pullin, the black woman faces

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a painful situation of the double strain of being a woman in a dominant male society and being black amidst the racial discrimination.

Novels about the early African American women talk about the situation of double jeopardy for black women. These women are marginalized by race and gender. According to the notions of the period during that time, the true woman is a character of virtue like Madonna: pure, pious and submissive. Some theologians say that Black Madonna represents diversity. The femininity and the blackness of the Black Madonna calls men towards gender and racial diversity. This figure calls for uniformity of the masculine and feminine sex, the combination of the white and the dark goddess in order for the wholeness and unity can arise amidst the diversity.

The Black Madonna may be interpreted as a symbol of man in the form of a metaphor as men move towards the new reality of the modern world. The survival of men in this age will depend on their willingness to appreciate and understand the unity amidst the diversity. Conclusion There are plenty of images of Black Madonna that exist worldwide. Reports show that at one time, there may have been more than 500 images that are mostly in Europe and France. In today's world, there are many people whose interest in the Black Madonna's have increased over the years.

Some of her most popular incarnations are found in countries from all over the globe in the form of literature, art and paintings. The Black Madonna may mean many things to many people but everyone must bear in mind that this image serves as a powerful reminder of the inspiration that it brought to the society. In her image, many people found their comforter, guide and power. She has been and always will be the feminine side of men that will never fail

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