



Imagine a community of people that has hardly changed its way of life in over twenty thousand years. There are several such communities existing in various parts of England. They are called Madrians, a term deriving from their word "madria", meaning mother - because their whole way of life, both social and religious, is based upon the supremacy of the female. Modern archacology shows that all over the world this matriarchal form of religious and social order was the norm up until three or four thousand years ago, when the more aggressive masculine systems started to take over. This only serves to confirm the age-old conviction of the Madrians that they are the "original people". The Celts and Druids have come and gone. The Roman and Teutonic religions have come and gone. The Christians have come, and nowadays their cult seems to be on the way out. But the Madrians show no sign of diminishing. In fact, for the first time in many centuries, they are starting to do missionary work among the "urbies" or non-Madrians.

To enter a traditional Madrian household is like stepping into another world. There are several different types of household, but let us take a fairly typical one. It will be situated either in one large house, or in a number of smaller houses; probably it will be based on a farm. It will be more like an extended clan than a modern family unit; it will contain several married couples and will cover four or five generations. Every wife and mother is the head of her own unit; the absolute mistress of her husband and children, but she in turn is in obedience to her own superiors: her mother, the priestess and the elders, or "wise women", of the clan. This is a wise arrangement, for it means that the absolute authority of a young wife is tempered by the mellow experience of older, deeply spiritual women.

There will be no modern gadgets in the household - not even an electric light. Clothes will be traditional; no grown woman will go out without a

veil over her head. This veil is a symbol of her authority, and of her status as a "guardian of the Mysteries". Just as the Goddess Herself is never seen fully unveiled, so every maid (the Madrians always call women "maids", they never use the term "woman") is on some level - either as householder, as practitioner of a sacred craft, as a mother, or simply as a fully initiated maiden - Her representative, and like Her, should not go fully unveiled except among her closest associates.

It would be easy to say that every aspect of the Madrian way of life has a religious reason; but that would be a little misleading. The very concept of religion is absent from the Madrian view of the world. The term "religion" was invented by patriarchal societies to designate a particular type of activity conceived as being separate from "everyday life". To a Madrian, neither "religion" nor "everyday life" has any meaning. Every activity of life is a ritual action performed to the glory of the Goddess in the way laid down by Her from the dawn of time. This is what the Madrians call themis. The word has been translated as "order" or "custom" or "law"; "authority", "balance", or even "faith". But perhaps the best and simplest translation is "harmony". Themis is the natural harmony and rhythm which the Goddess has established on earth. In nature it is sometimes called ecology; and provided it is not interfered with, it works very wonderfully, producing a perfect "balance of nature", among all the life-forms and forces, both physical and subtle, which make up the "household" (oikos is greek for household, and gives us the word "ecology") of our planet. But when that ecology, the law of the household, is broken, then we no longer have themis or harmony. We have anathemis. Then things start to go wrong; there is chaos and destruction. That is because the order laid down by the Goddess has been broken.

The same thing happens in human life. There themis is the matriarchal order of the human household. Economy in the true old-fashioned sense of the word (economy also comes from oikos). The mother rules her family, the elders rule the mothers, and so it goes on, right up to the Princess (who is also the chief priestess). And the priestess obeys God. She follows the law set down from the beginning. A whole society run directly by God Herself. That is what the Madrians mean by themis. But when themis is broken in human life, the

results are just as disastrous as when it is broken in nature. We have violence and wars, we have soaring crime and insanity rates, we have a lack of understanding between the generations. As one matriarch said to me: "Once society breaks themis and turns away from the Goddess, it can't last long; it starts to crumble".

"But patriarchal societies have lasted for thousands of years," I commented.

"A thousand years is not so long," she replied "the Madrian civilisation lasted for hundreds of thousands. The patriarchal order started crumbling from the day it was created. But it did not turn away from the Goddess completely. That is what has held it together. They used to worship Her as Mary, but then the Protestants stopped all that. The Tibetans used to worship Her as Tara, but then the Communists stopped all that. They have let go of their last lifeline. That is why they are drowning. It is like a maid who inherits an estate from her mother, but does no work. At first she sells off the estate bit by bit, and she thinks she is alright. She eats and drinks and enjoys herself. Then one day the money runs out and everything collapses. It is like that with patriarchy. They have been living off the spiritual inheritance of the Madrian ages. Now it is running out, and everything is collapsing."

"What will happen when it does collapse?"

"There will be great suffering, but then things will return to normal. There will be a newmatriarchal civilisation. Back to themis; that is the only way."

There is a new vitality in the traditional Madrian communities today, because they feel that their time is coming: the time predicted for hundreds of years when the patriarchal order will come to its end and the Old Order will resume its rightful place. All this technology and other nonsense will be swept aside and the old ways will return. It is written that "The serpent will bite his own tail", and the meaning of that saying is becoming clearer every day. Patriarchy will be destroyed by patriarchy. Technology will be destroyed

by technology. The signs are all there.

The Madrian opposition to technology has nothing to do with a sentimental conservatism or attachment to the past. Rather, it is based upon firm philosophical and spiritual principles. Madrians believe that every craft was taught by the Goddess (or rather, by one of Her Geniae, or secondary divinities) to human beings in the Golden Age. Each craft is not simply a means of producing physical goods such as shoes or vegetables. It is also a spiritual path. Every craft has its Ranyas. A Ranya is the equivalent of a guru in the east. But in Madrianism a Ranya may teach weaving or carpentry as well as meditation. But she teaches weaving or carpentry as a means to spiritual realisation. Every tool of the craft, every technique, every traditional form for the finished article, has a deep symbolic meaning. The working of the craft under the close spiritual and technical guidance of the Ranya produces what might be called "occupational meditation". That is the true meaning of the crafts. Just as the whole point and purpose of human incarnation is to transcend the material realm, so every legitimate human activity has its inner transcendental essence. If our work is done for nothing more than to produce food and physical comforts, we are living on the same level as animals; and, according to Madrian teaching, we will then be reborn as animals.

It is only when craft has descended to the animal level - when everyone has forgotten the true meaning of craft, and thinks that its sole purpose is to produce material goods - that a modern style technology can arise. Such a technology is very efficient at producing material goods, but only at the expense of destroying the whole structure of the sacred craft which has been laid down by the Goddess. Therefore technology is anathemis. It breaks the divine order and harmony. That is why no Madrian will work in technological industries or use the products of such industries. Missionaries who go out of the communities have to make some compromise on this latter point, of course. But in the stricter communities, if a person has touched an industrial product of any sort, she has to be carefully purified with rose-water before anyone is able to touch her! This is not as strange as it sounds; for things made out of themis have a definite aura of disharmony about them. This cannot be detected

by those who habitually handle such objects, as sensitivity to them is naturally dulled, but in the sensitive atmosphere of a themis community, such an influence can have a subtle but very real disruptive effect.

Such disruptions are all the more to be avoided because they affect not only the human members of a traditional community, but also the shia - the nature spirits or "fairies" which work in tune with the life of a themis community. The co-operation of this realm of subtle nature is particularly important in the area of agriculture; for these elementary nature spirits are attached to the fruits and flowers of the field and play a vital role in assisting their growth and development. Like all natural things which have not been tampered with by ignorant interference, the shia are in a condition of themis. They do not see themselves as a cut-off unit living only for the sake of living. They understand that they occupy a place within the cosmic hierarchy which ranges from the highest Geniae to the humblest creature in manifestation. Their life is very different from the human, but in their own way, they are fulfilling their purpose, and mounting steadily through the ritual activity of their appointed work to spiritual union with the Goddess; and they look back to the time when human beings did the same. In their quasi-human forms, their ordering is strictly matriarchal, and they have never deserted their own traditional ways. They can only look with amazement and incomprehension upon modern human civilisation.

The anathemis methods of modern industrialised "agriculture" are so repellent to the shia that they have all but deserted the main farming areas of the "developed" world. It is for this reason that the crops in these areas are becoming more and more sickly and subject to an ever-increasing number of diseases, so that they must be treated with growing multitudes of sprays and chemicals simply to keep them alive. On a Madrian farm, working in harmony with the shia, and with natural rhythms and methods (such as the careful observation of the phases of the moon and their agricultural applications), crops have been frequently obtained which border on the phenomenal.

But such a working relationship with the spirits of nature depends upon

the maintenance of themis within the community, not only in the avoidance of technological appliances, right devotion and right relations between maids and men, but also in all the customs and manners of life. Life in a Madrian community is rather like a dance. A great deal of what is said and done is directed by ancient custom. There is a feeling of peace, restraint, purity, respect and gentleness in a Madrian community, which contrasts sharply with the noise, bustle and rough "practicality" of the modern world. A Madrian is easily embarrassed by a wrong gesture or a word out of place. A maid in such circumstances may cover her face with her veil. Madrians are quicker to tears and to full-blooded innocent laughter than the wary and worldly-wise "urbies". In many ways, they are much closer to the shia, whom they often refer to as their "little sisters".

Madrians seem on the whole happier than "urbies"; they have fewer emotional problems, and nervous breakdowns are virtually unknown among them. They have a place in the world, and a sense of meaning which so many modern people are lacking. Madrian children are rarely rebellious, except in small ways. They feel a part of the community. They want to wear the clothes their elders wear, they are happy to be obedient (perhaps because they see that adults are also obedient) most of the time, but even when they aren't obedient, they have no doubt that they ought to be. That is because the chain of authority passes down from Heaven, in accordance with the law of the Goddess. Nobody needs to ask "why is this so?" or "who gives you the right to boss me?" Everybody knows why, and Who. Madrians work hard and enjoy their work, but they are also fond of their traditional stories and songs which are told at night around the fireside, and of the good, strong, home-brewed ale that goes with them.

Four times in each lunar month, the Rite of Sacrifice is held in every Madrian home. This consists of the ritual offering of a small honey-cake, and of a libation of wine or ale. It occurs within the context of a very ancient and powerful ritual which, however, does not require a priestess for its performance, but can be offered by the head of any house. Many young wives regularly officiate at their family Cult Domestic (the name given to the regular celebration of the Rite of Sacrifice in a home). But there are still more potent Rites, which may only be celebrated by a priestess, such as initiations

and the Rite of Communion. This latter, which is taken in bread and wine, goes back long before Christianity. For example, Cicero, more than half a century before the birth of Christ, explained how the communicants at Eleusis believed the bread of the Communion to be transubstantiated into the body of Demeter. Communion is taken at the Major Festivals, eight times a year, that is, at the solstices, equinoxes, the cross-quarter days in between them, and on one other occasion, the Festival of Artemis (or Diana), on the twenty-third of the month of Samhain (not to be confused with the Festival of Samhain itself, which falls on the first of the month and is one of the cross-quarter days). All these Festivals take place within the context of the traditional thirteen-month calendar.

These great Rites are celebrated by a priestess, and where possible, in a Temple. Temples were usually constructed in special rooms set aside in large manor houses, for in some rural areas, the landed gentry as well as the country folk were Madrian. Priestesses were always few and far between. One priestess to a village was usual. At the present time it is often less than that. Each priestess has a temple hierarchy under her, consisting of an Ancilla (personal ritual handmaid), Lady of the Temple, and a number of Temple maidens of different ranks. There has never been any male priesthood; but men are certainly initiated. All girls are initiated at fourteen (the number of the full moon), and all boys at sixteen (4 x 4; four, the number of matter, being the cardinal masculine number).

As has been indicated, the life of the Madrian communities has until recent times been strictly closed to all outsiders. Recently, though, a certain amount of missionary activity has been taking place largely centring on Lux Madriana, and the Pallas Academy has opened to teach Madrian philosophy and metaphysics, mostly by correspondence. These activities are not approved by all Madrians, and in fact a large majority of the traditional communities oppose any form of publicity. Nevertheless, the outward movement of the "catholic" minority, as they are called, is having a very definite effect. In an age of chaos and confusion, a growing number of people in England are ready to turn back to their spiritual roots and to seek in the pre-Christian tradition of their country in order to try to find the meaning and purpose of life, the certainty and the peace of mind, which modern ideologies, whether secular or "religious", cannot provide.