

Crones Don't Whine—They Shine

The Wisdom of Artemis

BY JEAN SHINODA BOLEN WITH VALERIE ANDREWS

The Dalai Lama has said it's up to Western women to change the world. The reason is simple: We are the first generation to have the education, the skills, the ability to travel, and the leisure time to adopt a cause. My own personal assignment is spearheading a fifth UN World Conference on Women that will be the first gathering of its kind since 1995. This grew out of my work with women's circles and my belief that together, women can accomplish anything.

In *Goddesses in Older Women: Crones Don't Whine* and my latest book, *Artemis: The Indomitable Spirit in Everywoman*, I urge women over 50, especially those who are reaching retirement age, to start find their own personal assignment and start giving back. This is the best way to stay young and vital. Instead of feeling the world shrink as you grow older, you will broaden your collaborations and connections and benefit from a new web of relationships. There is no better prescription to combat aging than to get out and get involved.

The patron saint of this new wave of activism is the Greek goddess Artemis, who was fiercely protective of women, children, and the natural world. I believe this archetype is growing in influence and is behind the recent increase in women-led NGOs and the spread of grassroots women's movements today.

Known as Diana to the Romans, Artemis was goddess of the hunt, known for her ability to focus and for her unerring aim. Fearless, she roamed the wilderness, armed with a bow and a quiver of arrows, accompanied by her dogs.

Girls under Artemis's protection were free to explore and run free in the years before they reached the age of marriage. She was also the divinity of the midwife, having birthed her twin brother Apollo (she came into this world



with her full powers); pregnant women prayed to her to relieve them from pain, and Artemisia, the herb that bears her name, is still used for this purpose.

Artemis had a predisposition toward egalitarian, brotherly relationships. She enjoyed competing with men, appreciated their skill and accomplishments, and roamed the wilderness with her chosen female companions, the forest nymphs.

Artemis has already had a strong influence on the women's movement—its early leaders identified with this archetype—and over the years, she has seized the popular imagination.

Girls and women with indomitable spirit are the new protagonists in many of the most-read novels and most-watched films of this decade. Artemis-inspired heroines include Katniss Everdeen in Suzanne Collins's *Hunger Games* trilogy; Lisbeth Salander is a darker side of this same spirit in Steig Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. I also see Atalanta in Anastasia Steele, the main character in E. L. James's *Fifty Shades of Grey*, who ventured into the wilder-

ness of emotion and sexuality.

These are women who call upon their intuition, depth of feeling, and courage to go beyond previous limits, who feel fear and outrage and have to adapt and endure and not give in or give up. Each has an inner spirit that is not subdued, a will that is not broken. Each in her own way is a quirky, independent, courageous person who ventures into uncharted territory.

How would I describe the psychological development of an Artemis woman? In her youth, she is likely to be an athlete, a Girl Scout, or an idealist or protestor. She's the young woman who wants to make a difference. During the women's movement in the 1970s, she was among the first to enter male-dominated professions. In her crone years, she proves to be a valuable guide, teacher, and source of inspiration. At 80, Gloria Steinem shows no signs of slowing down. She's just made a documentary with Ruchira Gupta about sex trafficking and is traveling the world to highlight this global problem.

Novelist Alice Walker, 70, recently joined

Medea Benjamin, 62, founder of Code Pink, to protest Israel's blockade of Gaza—entering the restricted area to bring humanitarian aid to residents. It was a dangerous undertaking, and Benjamin was detained and brutalized en route by Egyptian officials.

At 71, Marin's own Isabel Allende gave an inspired TED Talk about passionate aging. Allende, a wonderful Artemis, noted that the spirit never grows old, and we should never lose touch with what is timeless and eternal in ourselves.

Artemis crones also tend to have an abundance of empathy. They are not ashamed to feel deeply nor are they hesitant to identify with others.

That's why they are the backbone of so many organizations like Women in Black, an international group concerned with the devastating effects of war on women and children, or One Billion Rising that recently protested the abduction of schoolgirls by Nigerian terrorists. Artemis crones also took to the streets in India to protest that rape is commonplace in that country—they are now fighting to ensure the safety of young girls.

In America, Artemis crones are stirred to activism as they face their own life changes, are moved by the plight of a friend or by people halfway around the globe who have much less than they do.

With her 60th birthday approaching, Sausalito attorney Olga Murray went on a trek through Nepal, camped out on a mountain-top, and found herself surrounded by smiling children who could not afford to go to school. Murray says, "I immediately knew that was my mission—to find a way to help these young people get an education."

Over the next 24 years, Olga Murray and The Nepal Youth Foundation sent tens of thousands of children to school, founded two children's homes, and made great headway ending childhood malnutrition. The foundation has also abolished the practice of sending girls into indentured service, far away from home. "We have recovered a whole generation of young women, who now run their own NGO," adds Murray. "In addition to job training and education, they have received advocacy training, legal training, and journalism training." Artemis doesn't just solve the problem—she gives others the tools to become advocates as well.

Ask Olga Murray what to do with your life after 60, and she'll tell you: "Don't retire. Find a way to give back. Changing a child's life is the most incredible feeling you'll ever have, and I've experienced it over 40,000 times." Like Olga Murray, Artemis crones tend to see themselves as mothers of the world.

There is such a thing as a "late-blooming Artemis" too. An Artemis-inspired girl very likely climbed trees, went to summer camp, practically lived in a stable, and was wonderfully sure of herself. Yet at some point, she may have been encouraged to "be more ladylike" and settled down to more conventional pursuits.

There are many reasons women may be cut off from Artemis—including pressure to spend more time on academics and achievement. Women who have been humiliated or abused may lose their Artemis independence and for a time, feel too vulnerable to strike out on their own. When Artemis re-emerges, later in life, a woman receives a sudden jolt of energy, a wake-up call to those parts of her personality that have been suppressed.

No matter what happens, an Artemis type knows how to ground herself by spending time in nature. Consider 73-year-old Barbara Ehrenreich, who wrote *Nickel and Dimed* after working as a housecleaner, nursing home aid, and Walmart clerk. In her memoir, *Living with a World God*, Ehrenreich describes a visionary experience she had while walking in the high desert—a sense of oneness with creation that fueled her activism for years to come.

The wilderness also teaches an Artemis woman a good deal about patience. When fighting for a cause, we are likely to encounter setbacks or reversals, but Artemis can weather them.

What does an Artemis woman's personal life look like as she ages? She is not likely to have endured an oppressive marriage or become codependent. She tends to make egalitarian partnerships both at home and in the workplace and to have a wide circle of friends. As a die-hard activist, she is likely to overcommit, working on boards, committees, or causes, and it is doubtful she will ever complain of boredom or loneliness.

How do you know if you're an Artemis crone? You have earned this title if you have strong beliefs and don't hesitate to take a stand, if you take the less fortunate under your wing, have a strong women's circle, and are motivated by a sense of sisterhood.

The bottom line is this: as an Artemis woman, you are likely to come into your own as you grow older. You will be happy and fulfilled in your later years as you start helping others.

Jean Shinoda Bolen is a psychiatrist, Jungian analyst, and best-selling author. She has written 13 books turned into nearly 100 foreign translations. To learn more about the Artemis-inspired women's circles, go to MillionthCircle.com, and to support the next UN Conference on the State of Women, 5UNCSW.org.

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