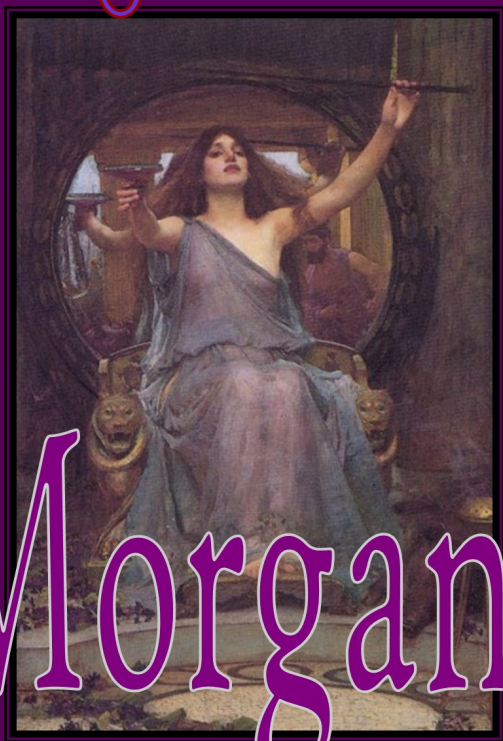


Interview with High Priestess



Morgana



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Interview with a High Priestess

- by A Skjold

Morgana, High Priestess of an established coven in Holland and international coordinator for the Pagan Federation, is no megalomaniac potentate wielding the rod of traditionalism over the backs of her followers. She is rather, the gentle voice that guides from within; quietly tumbling the ideology of power structures to dust, with a sphinx-like smile.

I ask Morgana, 'what is essential for the successful High Priestess in today's society? '

It is a white-hot day. We sit in the sun-blached garden, amongst a joyous profusion of colour, fragrance and

liveliness. She answers with one of her famous smiles,

"High Priestess is a paradox. A mystery. Self-development is very important and the group is as much important. One



feeds from the group, by giving back to the group. It is an organic exchange."

She describes some basic differences between the established church and the ancient nature based religions. The church is patriarchal and hierarchical, full of dictatorial rules, and followers are expected to conform without question—to fit clone-like into preordained roles.

But a nature based religion has organic form, ever changing and growing, its members are interrelated, yet followers have the freedom within the group to follow their own path.

"It is not spiritually useful all to be the same. Nature is diverse, every leaf on the tree is unique, individual, it is part of and dependent upon the tree, and the tree needs the leaves - all of them, to breathe."

The first thing to learn about Morgana is that she has never in her life conformed to establishment precepts. Following her heart, with

a genuine desire to help people find their potential, has been more important than fitting into any role.

It was this feeling for people that started her off on her spiritual journey. She left Liverpool to teach handicapped children at an Anthroposophical school in Holland for three years, where she met her future husband, Merlin, who had started reading about Wicca. The secluded school and gentle people offered Morgana a reclusive opportunity for growth and spiritual awareness. However, becoming disgruntled with the Christian attitude of the Anthrops, Morgana took the hippie trail to India, closing one phase, and starting another.

She went in search of a spiritual path that would not exclude women. India, the spiritual Mecca of the seventies, surely should have some answers. She took the overland trail via Afghanistan to New Delhi where she taught the deaf and dumb for a year.

India made a deep and lasting impression on Morgana.



Supposedly the most spiritual place on Earth, yet there was the constant threat of war, divergent extremes of poverty and politics, and religious factions stoning each other on the streets. It cost enormous emotional energy just to survive, and took her to limits she didn't know she had.

Returning to England, she suffered a cataclysmic culture shock. The West seemed so mechanical. Heathrow even smelled like an oily machine. After the heat, colour and vibrant life of Delhi, London was cold, grey and automated. She fled the UK for Holland where she had a job waiting, and Merlin.

Together they read voraciously, trying to follow the Gardenarian version of Wiccan training and path finding, depending entirely on each other for guidance and encouragement.

But Holland was changing. The easy-going gentle nature of the job vanished as recession loomed and the rat-race got dirtier. Morgana was fired, and they suddenly found themselves alone in

a hard, materialistic world. With their last few guilders, they went on a tenting trip in the UK, visiting all the known magical sites.

Merlin found an address on a stencil in a shop which he wanted to follow up. They knocked on a door of a house in Brighton, and the door was answered by a man who said, astonishingly, 'Come in we've been expecting you'.

Merlin and Morgana stayed in Brighton for some weeks and studied intensely with their host and hostess. They were initiated into the Wiccan Mystery Religion and returned to Holland to start their own coven.

That year, the Pagan Federation became a constitution and a whole wave of new

religions swamped the Netherlands; New Age groups and women's spirituality groups arrived from the USA, and from the UK, Gardenarian and Alexandrian forms of Wicca made the scene. It was 1979.



I observe Morgana never uses 'I' when talking about her place



as High Priestess and she answers with animation,

"In a world of I', 'I', 'I', there is such little emphasis put on the fact that we work together in this life. As human beings we are

responsible to each other and to planet Earth. In today's thinking there is a dimension of 'me' over here, alone, closed off . ." she makes a little box shape with her hands, *". . . and all that outside of me is 'other'."*

She waves her arms to encompass the garden, the sky, all of Holland, then leans forward earnestly.

"And that's not it! That's a cop-out. Herein lies the paradox. To say only 'I' is to escape personal responsibility. And if not personally

responsible to the whole, then 'we' is a hollow concept!"

She describes the coven as a family. A big, happy, chaotic family with Mum and Dad on hand to guide and protect. Members of the family 'belong' - they've come 'home' at initiation and they are guided through teething troubles and learning to walk, to adolescent testing the boundaries of their world, to final maturity when they leave home and start a family of their own. Even then, they still belong' in the family.

But with all the moves toward freedom of choice of worship in the world today, she doesn't think Wicca will ever become truly visible.

"Wicca is a mystery religion, and the mystical side of things will always be private, lonely. It can never be a mass thing."

"For those that are serious, there are long years of training and dedication; one must Honour the goddess by taking an oath, and it should never be taken lightly. Dedication is missing in people today. Traditionally, breaking an oath was considered worse than

murder!"



It seems there is a division amongst today's path followers. There are the hard core traditionalists who go in for arduous training, taking oaths of honour, of humility and spiritual questing. Much the same as a nun would take her vows, or a monk, his, and withdraw into a monastery.

Then there are those that are genuinely prepared to do their best toward the environment, say all the right things, and perhaps perform moon rituals; they are like people that attend church occasionally and say I am a good Christian. But they don't commit themselves any deeper.

The Pagan Federation has three principals which applicants must agree to, to become members. So even if they don't become

initiates, at least it is a way to bridge this gap. In everything the pagan has a choice. Yes. Or No.

Morgana works in an administrative position at a Bank, 36 hours a week. She says she has the constitution for the rat race - Merlin doesn't. She can compartmentalize.

"It 's easier, somehow; there's no spiritual dilemma working with figures, as there can be with people or children. "

"I wouldn't detach from the children, I 'd get involved, want to take them all into my family. You don't have that confusion with numbers! "

Then she adds,

"Although lately it's becoming a little awkward. I am becoming uneasy with where they are going at work, the attitude is getting into something I cannot associate myself with. A conflict of spiritual allegiances in the workplace is coming fast. "

So what does she see for the future?



"Not growing old gracefully," she laughs, sunshine lighting her face. The garden languishes in the heat. A large purple flower looks over my shoulder.

Morgana continues, *"I have several ideas. One is a library. I want to gather books that the world has*

not seen together since the destruction of the magnificent library at Alexandria. A bit ambitious, I suppose," she murmurs, twinkling. My impression is that she can't wait to take on the challenge.

"I want to pass something on. I want to learn what it means to be

useful as a 'crone'. It's such a waste in western society, to stuff the old and wise away into homes The role of 'elder' is missing. I want to develop a new form of accepted, revered elder in the community. “

“I have always been the pioneer, and I want to create this for our future- a proper community for older people, where they are useful and cherished. Perhaps working on the astral plane for those that are physically unable to join in rituals anymore; making plans to cope with the restrictions of ageing; finding talents to develop in the winter years; and how to help people pass over. We have experienced our first death recently, and



obviously this is going to happen more and more. We are all growing up, now.” She pauses, her ever-busy hands stilled.

“I want to create a place where I would want to spend my last

days. Imagine me in a home? Hell for me would be reaching the last lap of the journey and having to conform!"

I ask Morgana what she likes most about her life right now.

Throwing her arms wide she beams and says,

"I enjoy the freedom to do what I do. It is an absolute gift. I have never felt coerced by a government or regime, so I am grateful for the place and the time in which I've been born. Today, amongst all the cynicism and hard-heartedness, to know what you've got, is the most precious thing one can ask for. Life is so fragile; it can change in a second. Enjoy what you've got."

As High Priestess, Morgana has no problems with 'control' or 'power struggles in office' as these are entirely foreign concepts.

There is no difficult balancing act between different hats - or robes - because there is only one robe. Morgana is simply following her Goddess; heart, mind and soul, whether at work or at play or while counselling. Whatever the task in her long day, it is just another

fold of the same garment. This is the robe in which she is completely free to enjoy life, and she does!

As the Wiccan creed begins: *'If it harms none, do what you will'*
- so Morgana lives her life.



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