

## **Witches, Shamans and the Girls at Puberty**

### **Summary**

The possible nexus between the girls' puberty rites, the origin of Venus figurines, the witch cult in Western Europe and shamanism in Eastern Europe and Asia is discussed. It is a possibility that the Venus figurines can be associated with both the girl's puberty rites and the hunting magic. In many recorded accounts from the modern times, the puberty rites are mainly there to exclude girls at puberty due to their 'evil' influence. The mistress of animals who is associated with the witch cult is supposed to help hunter-gatherers with their search for the game. Considering the connections between witch cult, shamanism and the girls at puberty, it is reasoned that the seeming contradiction between the seclusion of girls at puberty and the association of female personage/s with hunting may be dismissible.

### **Introduction**

The possibility of some association between the Prehistoric Venus Figurines and the seclusion of girls at puberty can be more than mere speculation (Arachige 2009 & 2010). The scholars such as Frazer (1993), Benedict (1934) and Richards (1962) extensively studied the rites pertaining to the puberty of girls even though they didn't discuss the reasons for the origin of such rites. In this article what is attempted is to find some parallels between the puberty rites of the girls and two other cultural constructs, namely, shamanism and witch cult, as practiced by European cultures in the recent past and place such rites in the perspective of socio-cultural environment in the pre-historic times.

Thus, the main hypothesis posited in this article is that the seclusion of girls at puberty rituals might have preceded the cultural traits such as shamanism and witch cult. Therefore, it is very probable that in Europe, the fear of first menstruation receded and branched off into three separate cultural elements; the 'mistress of the game' cult which might have later developed into the witch cult, the shamanism and the residual fear of menstruation.

### **Witch Cult**

Gimbutas (1990:195-198) connecting the old European Goddess with the Palaeolithic Venuses through corpulence and association with wild animals claimed that she continued to exist into ancient Greek and Anatolian times in Hecate-Artemis, who was the Queen of the Ghosts, sweeping through the night, flanked by animals reminding us of more agricultural nature of the society of the times, and Dianic Cult in Roman Europe. According to Berens (2007:85) "Hecate appears as a gigantic woman, bearing a torch and a sword. Her feet and hair are formed of snakes, and her passage is

accompanied by voices of thunder, weird shrieks and yells, and the deep baying and howling of dogs". The presence of dogs may be indicative of her relationship to an agricultural society with domesticated animals or to the madness which was thought about in relation to canine traits (Porter 2002:12). However, this doesn't mean that Hecate depicted here could have been a later construct on a changing socio-cultural landscape. It doesn't exclude the possibility that Hecate had been a prehistoric personage whose form changed over millennia to suit various aspects of changing societies. "Armed with her bow and quiver, and attended by her train of huntresses, who were nymphs of the woods and springs, she [*Artemis*] roamed over the mountains in pursuit of her favourite exercise, destroying in her course the wild animals of the forest" (Berens 2007:87). Artemis was the virgin goddess who pursued game in the forest. Ginzburg (1990:131-132) also touches on the connection between the ancient idea of "mistress of the game" and Hecate-Artemis. It is also noteworthy that Hecate's help was sought in case of madness which was considered to be caused by the departed (Baroja 2001:26). The madness, in the ancient Greece, was also used to describe the 'loss of consciousness' which was experienced by the Pythia, the prophetess at Delphi and the priestesses at Dodona.

On the other hand, Murray (2001:6-7; 1921:60) believed that the figure of the Sorcerer from the Three Brothers cave in Ariège, France dating back to Lower Palaeolithic period is the horned god worshipped in the cult of witches. She also finds the continuity of the image of the horned god into the period just before the beginning of the Egyptian History and in some theriomorphic images found in later periods. Further to the above, she also believed that the horned god became the devil in the later religion. Even though there are differences of opinion as to the acceptability of her assertions, it isn't ridiculous to speculate such a link between the witches cult and Palaeolithic imagery. One of her early critics (Summers 1994:32-36), who believed witch cult to be Satanistic, dismissed her assertions about the link between pre-Christian 'Dianic cult' and witch cult mainly on religious reasons. While being critical about Murray's lack of objectivism, Ginzburg (1992:8-9) is, however, also concerned about the consequences of totally ignoring the core truth in her arguments and draws the attention to night flying and animal metamorphosis which were associated with witchcraft as detailed in the medieval records. Another scholar previously quoted, Baroja (2001:243-244) proposes that there should be a distinction between what witches believe and what is believed about witches. This distinction leads to the separation of horned god or the devil from the magical aspects of witch cult associated with Diana, Hecate, etc. Both of these views converge in an effort to explain what witches believed that they were capable of and how Witches' Sabbath can be viewed through the effect of hallucinogens (Baroja 2001:254; Ginzburg 1992:303-304). Therefore, the crux of the matter is about the magical abilities which the witches claimed to have. As can be seen from the discussion

elsewhere, it is also significant to note their connection to wild animals. They were believed to change themselves or others to animals to go on their night flying or to take revenge (Baroja 2001:36).

Summers (1994:7, :186) mention that the participants at Sabbath, which took place at night, disguised themselves as beasts or cover their faces to disguise their identities. A similar association with animals will be met in connection to shamanism in the following sections of this article.

### **Nexus between Shamanism and Witch Cult**

Shamanism, although mainly practiced in Eastern Europe and Asia in a restrictive sense in contrast to Western European practice of witchcraft, is considered to be 'another major practice' common to 'the great majority of hunting and gathering peoples' (Lee & Dally 1999:5). According to Lewis-Williams (1997, 2004) shamanism goes back to Palaeolithic times when our ancestors painted in the western European caves. The shamans who ventured into the deep underground caves attained an altered state of consciousness which helped them to create rock art (Lewis-Williams 2004:234). Thus, the prehistoric prevalence of shamanism is a widely-held view which exists independent of the real nature of the practice at the beginning. Another important idea attached to shamanism is the connection between animals and shamans. This connection is evident from, if we contribute to Alice Murray's views on the subject, the so-called sorcerer from the Three Brothers cave to the drawing of the '*human-animal*' Tungus priest by Nicholas Witzen in his work 'Tartary North and East' published in 1692. Thus, the connection between shamanism and animals can be traced through a long time span. It is also important to remember that the witches in the middle ages were 'chosen' and given the Devil's Mark (Summer 1994:70-76) and many of the Eurasian shamans were also 'chosen' with the likes of an illness or the heredity. We can also add the role played by animal helpers in shamanism and the association of witch cult with animals through the night flights of witches on animals (Ginzburg 1990:90) and the disguise, 'in the shape of an animal', used by the 'the leader of the Sabbath'. As pointed out by Summers, this masquerade has its origin in heathendom and the practices such as going about in the skin of an animal or putting on 'the head of beasts' were denounced by the Church in England in the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Summers 1994:134). Viewing the nexus between shamanism and witch cult from another angle, the following quote by an expert in the field links the witch cult and shamanism; "..., *the ecstasies of the followers of the goddess irresistibly call to mind those of the shamans-men and women-of Siberia and Lapland*" (Ginzburg 1990:136).

### **Shamans and Women**

Throughout the previous sections of this article, we implicitly believe the possibility of, at least, some of the early shamans being women. Now, the question arises how to explain the connection between the male shaman in modern to historical times and the female personages related to puberty. It is important to note that in many cultures in Siberia, the shaman represented an androgynous character the borderline nature of which made him effective as a shaman (Hoppal 2007:42). According to Eliade

(1964:28) the election of a shaman is accompanied by a comparatively serious illness which coincides with the onset of sexual maturity or via the hereditary route. The Last Oroqen Shaman received his calling to become a shaman after falling sick at the age of sixteen (Knoll & Shi 2004). Interestingly, to be healed he was taken to a powerful female shaman. However, Hoppal (2007:23-24) quoting a Siberian ethnographer, M. Kenin-Lopsan grouped shamans into five categories, namely, hereditary, originating from earth and water spirits, descending from sky, having gone through a severe illness like epilepsy or madness and acquiring shamanic abilities from an evil spirit. Thus, the hereditary shamanism, despite being the major group, is only one among five groups of shamanic initiations. This might well be due to later transition of shamanism to a *vocation* which differentiated itself from other four categories triggered by rather magical causes. This doesn't nullify the fact that the early predecessors of shamans might have been the females who acquired some magical power. Mediumistic divination of Nguni in South Africa was mainly done by women who underwent a "life-transforming, ancestor-sent illness" before becoming mediums (Hammond-Tooke 2002). Similarly, among other researchers, Zimon (2006) considers that the spirit possession is more common in African women than men and that this may be due to the inferior treatment given to women in general. Similarly, in Philippines, the female shaman *babaylan* who acted as the mediator between the spiritual world and physical world dominates the prehispanic accounts of women and was selected by an ancestral spirit through an intense experience such as a trance or illness (Abrera 2009). Thus it is very difficult for us to ignore the dominant role played by female shaman in many societies.

Eliade (1964:64) also discussed period of seclusion in the bush, face and body daubed with ashes or similar material, symbolic descent to the underworld, suspension in the air as among the initiatory rites for admittance to a 'secret society' or passage from one group to another. He sees the association between these rites and the future shaman's initiatory process. This helps us to place the puberty rite of girls to be treated in a similar context. They like shamans are suspended between heaven and earth and are in seclusion. Therefore, one probable explanation for the later dominance of male shamans is that the symbolism around the personages related to puberty preceded shamanic traditions and due to socio-cultural changes shamanism became a role mainly played by males. This may or may not be linked to the transition from a gynarchy to an androcracy as Gimbutas (1991:xx) advocated. However, the influence of women in shamanism is still evident that some of the tutelary spirits guiding male shamans are females. As Eliade (1964:81) explains that the "feminine" tutelary spirits that are indispensable to shamans in their ecstatic experience. He also points out the helping hand that the feminine beings give the mythological heroes in their quests for immortality or to achieve victory in the initiation process (Eliade 1964:78). It is also noteworthy that until certain time, in

Chinese culture, the source of magical power happened to be with women (Elidae 1964:448). Again, Eliade (1964:461-462) writing about Korean shamanism says that in Korea male shamans are outnumbered by female shamans. Contemplating the relationship of shamanism to hunter and nomadic cultures, he assumes that the female dominance in Korean shamanism is a later practice arising from the southern influence or due to deterioration of traditional, male-oriented shamanism. However, this later claim is, somewhat, in disagreement with repeated references in his book to the influence of "Mother Goddess". Perhaps, due to similar inconsistencies among others led Tedlock (2005) to complain about Elidae's male bias in his classic on shamanism. If we assume diffusion of the ideas around importance of the divine feminine as the reason for the special treatment of women in early history, this influence might well have arisen in prehistoric time. Thus, the Korean experience may rather signify a practice continuing from the ancient times than a result of breakdown of tradition unless otherwise proven by historical records.

### **Original Shaman**

In previous section, we could see the important role played by women in shamanic practices in many parts of the world. An important question then arises is whether the first shamans were male or female? Adovasio, Soffer & Page (2007:12) provides a hint towards a possible answer. According to them, the presumption that the caves like Lascaux is man's world where the women folk of the period never set foot or got involved in creating the art in them has absolutely no evidence. They further state that there neither is any evidence for men's involvement. There is now evidence to show that the footprints found in the cave far underground are of people of both sexes (Fagan 2010:235). Thus, combining the above view with the prevalent opinion that many of these underground chambers might have been reserved for ritualistic practices with shamanic slant such as initiations and vision quests (Pfeiffer 1973:235; Lewis-Williams 2004:266) the early shamans who used the caves, at least some of them, could have been female. Given the equality between sexes suggested by the evidence from skeletal remains indicating that in 'the physical activities and mobility patterns' women participated in no lesser way than men (Trinkaus 2005) and the far larger abundance of figurines depicting females from the Palaeolithic times (McDermott 1996), it is not unreasonable to believe that women had at least an equal say in many matters important to the community. One of these matters should surely be the religio-magical aspect given the magical qualities attributed to women by various societies. However, one strong argument for the feminine origin of the shamanism comes from the body of the female shaman discovered in Dolní Věstonice where some well-known Venus figurines were also found (Tedlock 2005). The skeletal remains considered to be of a woman had a fox in one hand and the traces of red ochre on her bones and the earth nearby indicating the presence of ochre on the

body. Tedlock (2005) shows the influence of women in shamanic practices all over the world and suggest that the Venus figurines belonged to women shamans who practised midwifery among other things. Even if we discount the accuracy of the determination of sex of the skeleton and its existence as a chance event, the large majority of Venus figurines found in many parts of Europe indicate the involvement of females in some magical aspect of the Palaeolithic social life.

Thus, it is also possible that women played a greater role in these prehistoric societies due to their perceived magical abilities. According to Baroja (2001:47:48), in Germany, women were treated as sacred and people felt respect and fear for them simultaneously. Haarmann (2009) discussing the Luba people who inhabit the south-eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo mention the common belief among both women and men that women who are also diviners and healers have “*an exceptional capacity to attract spiritual power*”. In the ancient Greece it was the uneducated country girls who were selected as trainee priestess at Delphi (Jaynes 1990:341) in modern day, Afro-Brazilian Umbanda religion, about seventy percent of mediums at a typical *gira* are women (Jaynes 1990:353-354). The universal influence of women as described in the quote below suggests that in the historical times, magical power of women had been so widespread: “*Here we cannot undertake to cite the material that proves how vast a role was performed by the woman...as priestess and witch*” (Neumann 1991:293). He goes on to say that “[i]t suffices to point out that she originally played this role in Sumer, Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt, Greece.....Polynesia, Australia; in short throughout the uncivilised and civilised world (Neumann 1991:293).” Jaynes (1990:344-360) suggests that the majority of possessions and most of oracles and sibyls, at least in European cultures, were women possibly due to the fact that women’s psychological functions are relatively equally spread across two brain hemispheres. If the role of women described above is due to physiological reasons, then it is very easy to see why the early shamans in prehistoric times, at least the majority of them, should have been females.

If we, to investigate another point of view, look at the women’s role in magical and spiritual life of the early societies in the light of what Taylor (1889:112-115) pointed out about what the more ‘higher races’ believed about ‘lower’ or indigenous ‘races’, it is very tempting to believe that women had been treated as lesser individuals by people in some prehistoric time. The lesser ‘races’ or community of people living in proximity to a so-called ‘higher’ community seemed to be subject of the accusation of having magical powers that could harm people. The widespread belief of women’s magical powers could well have arisen from the perceived beliefs about their social status. Note what Zimon (2006) had to say about the spirit possession in African women. As we discussed earlier, shamanic abilities can also start with a comparatively serious illness which coincides with the onset of sexual maturity. Here we can see the beliefs around the puberty and the onset of magical powers. Puberty in a girl is a time when they start to grow differently to a boy. It is likely that due to these differences, they had been treated as a lesser ‘race’ attributed with magical powers. The magical powers attributed to a girl at puberty by various societies world over in known times should be viewed in conjunction with this view. Alternatively, the above view might have arisen after taking root of the male dominance in

prehistoric societies. In any case, ancient societies have shown us that the male dominance and the spiritual superiority of women can co-exist. One example is the role played by the Pythia in the misogynist Greek social environment which then existed. Perhaps, the main counter example to this comes from Aboriginal Australians whose men had the monopoly of ritualistic life even though the women in the same cult-lodge were said to have the same dreamtime ancestry (Gould 1969:109). This may be due to the marriage traditions which left the men as traditional owners of the territory while women married and left the territory (Broome 1994:19). This doesn't mean that the aboriginal woman's role has always been devoid of sacred or ritualistic functions.

### **Shamanism & Covering of face**

In the societies from Iceland to Siberia and even the cuna of Panama, the shamanic power of the caul-bearers has been widespread. Covering of the face with a cloth adorned with animal bones and teeth by a shaman among the Samoyeds in Siberia is associated with the gift of caulbearer's second sight (Ginzburg 1990:264). The Yurak-Samoyed also believe that the future shaman is marked by being born with the "shirt" – caul (Eliade 1964:16). The caul can be seen in the context of its connection to the non-born or the death via the practice of covering the face of the dead (Ginzburg 1990:265) which has been linked to the idea of transformation. The magical power of caul is, in a narrow sense, associated with the covering of head, not just the face, at the time of birth. However, this still should have similar symbolism as can be seen from the above Samoyed shamanic practice. As Arachige (2010) suggested, the puberty rite of "not to see the sun" could have been represented in the faceless Venus figurines. The facelessness shown in the figurines might have been caused by wearing a veil, implied or real, to cover the face. In spite of the conclusion they reached Adovasio, Soffer & Page (2007:190) claim that when the 'partly clad' Venus figurines wear hats or caps, a fairly common feature that could be observed is that 'the facial details are absent'. This may also indicate that attached to the hats or caps there was a *veil* which covered the face. This is one of the possibilities Arachige (2010) discussed with respect to some of the Venus figurines. It is also noteworthy that many Japanese women shamans are blind from birth (Eliade 1964:463). In the ancient Egypt, the future sorcerer (shaman) would be selected at birth as a hereditary right. However, to become a sorcerer, he has to go through a strict regime and taboos. He is compelled to hide his face by wearing a mask to discourage transparency (Nasser 1987). Thus, not seeing the sun or covering the face seems to be associated with magical powers in one way or another from prehistory through historic times to recent history. Summers (1994:7,:186) pointed out that at Sabbath, even though it took place at night, the participants practiced wearing of masks to hide their identities. Despite of this interpretation about covering one's identity, wearing a mask or headdress can also mean the acquisition of magical powers through the transformative character which makes the person

in the mask different to the real person in a mask. In Sri Lanka, the traditional devil dancers performing a séance, who would help heal their subject with an illness, took the form of a devil by wearing a mask. Thus, it may not be otherworldly to speculate an association between a tradition started with the prehistoric Venuses and prevalence of magical power of 'not seeing the sun' in many varied forms.

### **Witches, Shamans & Puberty Rites**

The first menstruation beliefs taking a different form and their absence in Europe are not a strange phenomenon. There exist such other beliefs which show geographical differences. For an example, even the shamanic phenomenon of ecstasy and the journey to the beyond that is prevalent in Eurasia and discussed elsewhere in this article cannot be found in the same form in African shamanism where spirit possession takes their place (Ginzburg 1999:249). Shamanism in the strict sense revolves around Siberia and Central Asia where the spontaneous arrival of ecstasy makes the shaman, who doesn't become an instrument of spirits, to travel in the sky or the underworld (Eliade 1964:24).

Now, let us look at the witch cult & the puberty rites keeping the above in mind. From the Frazer's extensive collection of ethnographic studies on the seclusion of girls at puberty in his book "*Balder the Beautiful*" we can assume that either he didn't collect evidence from Europe about this practice or the girls' puberty rites had already died off in Europe long before the ethnographers were interested in puberty rituals. From his account on the folklore from Europe it is quite possible that the practice died off in Europe during prehistoric times and he couldn't find direct evidence for such practices through his European sources. A plausible reason for this could be due to some other practice which absorbed these puberty rites in one form or another. A good example for such absorption comes from Philippines where there are records of maidens, *binukot*, who were secluded at a younger age and kept in special chambers or towers so that they wouldn't see the sun or wouldn't be seen by men (Abrera 2009). This shows strong indication to be a variation of puberty rites and had been in existence in parallel to the seclusion of girls at puberty. Another possibility is that Europeans gave up practising puberty rites in the form of seclusion of girls at some time after Palaeolithic period. When looking at the diffusion of the practice in various guises in many parts of the world it is very likely that it in a form similar to what was practiced as seclusion of girls might have been practiced in Europe before the records began. Other reasons for such a belief is based on the prevalence of folkloric traditions, as mentioned by Frazer in his account on Europe, the fear of menstruation widespread until modern times (Frazer 1993:606) and other similar social taboos on menstruating women as described by Pliny (Chap xv, Seventh Book of Natural History) and embedded in some religious texts ( Leviticus

15:19-30). That may mean that the European belief on the 'fear' of first menstruation died out and the fear of menstruation in general remained.

### **Girls & Hunting Magic**

An important question which needs answering is the conflicting ideas of the Venus figurines being associated with hunting and the girls at puberty being described by many communities as an evil influence on many things including hunting. If this is the case, how can the Venus figurines be associated with puberty rites? As discussed in a previous paragraph the European traditions might have branched out into three different conceptual frameworks, namely, witch cult, shamanism and a residual fear of menstruation. It is now worth mentioning that no one could look at the statue of Artemis at Pallene kept concealed throughout the year except for a few days as "the eyes of the goddess turned fruits dry on the trees..." Ginzburg (1992:131). Artemis being the huntress could also be the virgin who had magical powers of a girl at puberty.

Among the abilities of night-flying and transformation, witches were blamed for 'killing cattle, causing famine on the land and infertility in the field' (Baroja 1991:116), causing 'storms and spells against crops and animals' (Baroja 1991:176-177). Contrast the above against the deeds like blighting crops, killing seedlings and blasting gardens attributed to the touch of menstruating women whose presence in a boat was said to raise a storm (Frazer 1993:606). In essence these are the deeds which had been occurring in different ways, namely, by the touch of the menstruating woman and the spells of the witch. The last point should also be viewed in the context of our previous discussion about the symbolic linkages between the witch cult presided by the 'huntress' and the menstruation fears. Another prehistoric fact is that the Venuses carved on the limestone blocks at Laussel should be considered as a 'part of the repertoire of figures' (Marschack 1991:335) which includes a "hunter" and figures of animals. The Palaeolithic petro glyph from a prehistoric site near Tiout, Algeria where a male hunter is connected, from genital to genital, to a female figure with upraised arms and no feet (Campbell 1972:Fig17) show animals alongside human figures. The large number of animal figurines found in the proximity of such Venus figurines, according to Neumann (1991:96), indicates that the Great Goddess is the mother of all living things, both animals and men. Even though, this is a conclusion he could draw by first accepting that the Venus figurines represent Great Goddess, the connection between animals and the figurines are not disputed. Pike-Tay (2001: 236) points out that the Venus figurines from Perigordian times may have played a mystical or ritualistic role in ensuring ease in labour, fertility and success in the hunt. However, it is also possible that the animals found in proximity to Venus figurines may serve as spirit helpers. To quote Hoppal (2007:23): "*The idea of spirit helpers of an animal shape can be supposed to derive from its ancient character, from the age*

*when for human beings animals represented both idols and an inscrutable force, which they could only scarcely control, and then only with the help of magic. That era goes back to the Palaeolithic, when animals were generally looked upon as superior and sacred,...*". Siberian shamans also considered bulls, eagles and bears as better spirit helpers (Hoppal 2007:23). For San people, rock paintings of Elands exude potency that can be received by touching those (Jolly 1986). It is also important to remember for many primitive societies, seeing and meeting animals can portend the events to come (Taylor 1889:119). Thus, it is also probable that the art representing animals found near the Venuses depicts the spirit helpers of the '*female shamans*' who help them for a successful hunt.

Even though in the hunter gatherer societies which survived the test of time for a long time, we only find reports about the girls at puberty being kept away, there are instances where the girls participated in hunting. In his report on a first generation descendent of the Transkei San people Jolly (1986) makes an interesting reference to a young girl, accompanying an Eland hunting party, who would usually 'hypnotize' the 'great animal' by pointing an arrow treated with 'medicine'. '*The eland would become dazed and semi-paralysed. It would be led back to the hunters to the cave under their supernatural control. Here it would become dizzy and fall*' (Jolly 1986). It was not mentioned in the article whether the girl was pubescent or prepubescent. This anecdote also points to the perceived relationship between females and the animals, extending to the recent times.

Eland Bull dance of San people provides another ritual worth noting. For the San hunters the time between wounding an Eland with a poison arrow and finding the animal later represents a very anxious period wrought with many magical observances. The hunter who wounded the animal would be kept away from women and children in a hut. '*The construction of this hut by the old men and its associations of illness closely parallel the building of a hut for the seclusion of a girl at puberty, and strongly suggest that we are dealing with rituals attendant upon a first-kill eland. Among the !Kung, the boys' eland first-kill rituals are in some ways a mirror image of the girls' puberty rituals.*' (Lewis-Williams and Biesele 1978:126). It is also noteworthy that given the possibility of the seclusion of girls preceding the eland first-kill ritual due to the diffusion hypothesis of the puberty rituals (Arachige 2009) it is not outlandish to assume that there can be some symbolic connection between hunting magic and girls' puberty rites. This may mean that the early hunters might have borrowed from their female counterparts some ways to use magical, transformative abilities which girls at puberty share with the shaman. As Arachige (2010) indicated out every girl secluded at puberty mightn't have become a 'woman shaman'; it might have been only the '*choseri*' initiate who would have transformed herself to become the friend of hunters. For an example, Lucy Thompson, a woman of Yurok Indian

extraction, wrote about young women being selected as novices shortly after puberty to be trained as 'shamans' (Tedlock 2005). As we have already seen Eurasian shamanism is not mainly dependent on a drug-induced state or 'spirit possession' in Mediumistic sense. Many of these shamans are products of some crucial transformative event which convey the perception that they are 'chosen'.

## **Conclusion**

In the above article, we could see that the practices such as seclusion of girls at puberty, witch cult and shamanism may be connected in a socio-cultural framework which takes us back to the Palaeolithic times. We could also see the web of connections between the prehistoric Venus figurines, the mythical content surrounding the mistress of the game and the animal artefacts. We also could see the connections between the head dress, ecstatic travels, androgynous nature and animal helpers of the shaman and the various aspects of the witch cult in the ancient Europe. It was also very probable that since prehistoric times, women played a crucial role in the cultural entanglements that we looked at in the previous sections. The possibility that the association between the Venus figurines and the girls at puberty is far-fetched is dismissible and could have been influenced by many socio-cultural undercurrents that cannot be seen in archaeological records. To conclude, in Europe, the initial influence of the puberty rites on the behaviours associated with the origin of Venus figurines might have co-existed with the 'later' beliefs attributed to the evil influence of girls at puberty.

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