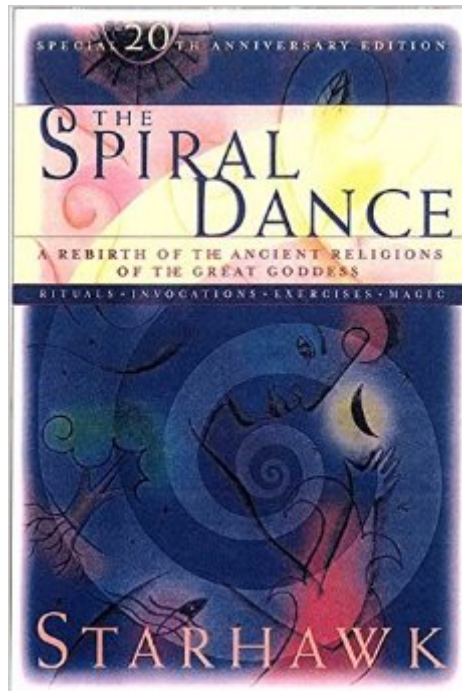


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The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth Of The Ancient Religion Of The Goddess: 20th Anniversary Edition



Synopsis

The twentieth anniversary edition of *The Spiral Dance* celebrates the pivotal role the book has had in bringing Goddess worship to the religious forefront. This bestselling classic is both an unparalleled reference on the practices and philosophies of Witchcraft and a guide to the life-affirming ways in which readers can turn to the Goddess to deepen their sense of personal pride, develop their inner power, and integrate mind, body, and spirit. Starhawk's brilliant, comprehensive overview of the growth, suppression, and modern-day re-emergence of Wicca as a Goddess-worshipping religion has left an indelible mark on the feminist spiritual consciousness. In a new introduction, Starhawk reveals the ways in which Goddess religion and the practice of ritual have adapted and developed over the last twenty years, and she reflects on the ways in which these changes have influenced and enhanced her original ideas. In the face of an ever-changing world, this invaluable spiritual guidebook is more relevant than ever.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am 33 years old. I've been practicing the Craft and neo-paganism for 12 years with diviations from the path to study Buddhism, Pantheism & Athiesm. I own the first edition of this book. It was my first introduction to the Craft along with *Drawing Down the Moon*. At the time it was one of FEW books on the subject of Witchcraft and Goddess Religion. I have extremely fond memories of it. When I read it I couldn't put it down. It described so many of my feelings about religion and spirituality and it

didn't talk down to me like so many of the books I read later like stuff from Llewellyn Publishing. It spoke to my heart as no other religion had. Also, I kept expecting the chapter on magic to tell me that it was a state of mind not a thing that you could actually do and have it work! I have kept my tattered copy through seven moves. It survived a purging of my Craft books when I had moved beyond 101 stuff and decided not to keep hauling a huge library around for other people. Now that I'm moving back to focus on the Craft again it was the first book I picked up, of course. And I was disappointed. Since I read it 12 years ago I have gotten a degree in History. It has become common knowledge that Margaret Murray's history is at best nice mythology. There is now a real debate going on about the Goddess utopia in ancient prehistory that is leaning HEAVILY towards the assertion that the concept is again, nice mythology. YET she still uses this bogus/controversial history as fact--in the main text! She did not rewrite the chapter on The God at all for the *newest edition*, and it needed it because most of her information comes from Murray.

The Spiral Dance is not an easy book for me to evaluate. Or to live with either. Add the pluses and minuses together, and the two extremes of what's good and what I find troubling pretty much cancel each other out. First the pluses. Nobody nowhere can *ever* measure just how influential this book has been on the modern neopagan movement. I would guess that just about every pagan I know, myself included, has a copy on the shelf. I'd also venture to guess that it's also been responsible for more women starting up their own covens than any other single book in the United States. (Scott Cunningham's *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner* may be the most popular beginner's book these days, but *Spiral Dance* is still likely to be the #1 coven source book around.) The hugely important thing that Starhawk did was to take some of the basic ideas of modern Witchcraft as it was being exported from Britain to the United States and to marry those concepts with the developing feminist/earth-first/spiritual sensibilities that were active out on the West Coast in the early to mid 70's. Put the two together and in a blaze of white light you've given birth to the Goddess Movement. The Goddess movement, its core ideas and sensibilities, expanded the vocabulary of American Witches and allowed those Witches to continue to develop their own spiritual forms independently from the traditional Gardnerian structures. Much of this was going on anyway, (check out the 13 Principles of Wiccan Beliefs, as promulgated by the Council of American Witches in 1974) but the *Spiral Dance* gave it an immediately accessible shape. However, in that innovation itself lies some of the problems I have with Starhawk's work. Simply put, the Goddess Movement is not the same thing as Witchcraft or Wicca.

The Spiral Dance remains one of the most important and influential books on modern American NeoPaganism and one that I highly recommend. Starhawk essentially married some core Wiccan beliefs and practices to the social and political ideas of the 70s -- feminism, environmentalism, gay rights, civil rights, and the peace movement. In doing so, she created a new path that is less concerned with secrecy and tradition and more with a sustainable future. Her tradition continues to thrive. Many criticize Starhawk unfairly, forgetting that The Spiral Dance was published in 1979 and is clearly a product of its time. Starhawk makes no distinctions between Paganism, Wicca, and Witchcraft, but few writers did in the 70s. She also presents Wicca as an ancient religion and the Burning Times as a persecution of Witches. These ideas have since been debunked, but they were prevalent at the time. Starhawk is well aware of this and she revisits these issues in her commentary. With The Spiral Dance, Starhawk presented an entirely new model of spirituality in an era where there were scarcely any models of women's spiritual power and leadership. It may be hard to see now just how mind altering the very concept of a Goddess is, but at the time, it was a radical, illuminating idea. So, yes, Starhawk spends a lot of time talking about the Goddess and what a liberating path this is for women. But by no means is this a women-only book. On the contrary, Starhawk emphasizes that Wicca is for everyone and is clear about her position: that a female-only model of the universe would prove to be as constricting and oppressive, to women and men, as the patriarchal model has been.

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