

From *Hanta Yo*
By Ruth Beebe Hill

Three hundred winters in the past the Dakotah discover a critical need for something that shall compel truth. And so they come together as one body, one thought. Four old wakanhca (Seer/Shaman/Prophet) who everyone knows instruct the people. And so the Dakotah - not one dissenting voice, none of different heart - watch the round moon light the faces of eight pure young women, persons tender and receptive whose presence will attract and permit influence. And now the Dakotah, making conscious use of skan (life force), command the appearance of something good. And the invisible grandfathers, recognizing an urgency for wisdom and a need for help directly from the source, exert a matching strength.

Now Ptesanwin (White Buffalo Woman) emerges, the life-force in the shape of a good-looking young woman, someone who announces herself as visible breath. For so long as the power endures - power from visible and invisible sustaining her as woman-body - Ptesanwin instructs in ceremony and presents the pipe. But when the people start letting go, this woman walks away. Then, sitting down, she becomes pte (buffalo), the reliable four-legged through whom the unseen ancients often send messages.

But when the power for holding on truly wanes, the pte-form also disappears; only the stone pipe endures. And so the people keep the pipe as a symbol of that which they ask for, a symbol they will use in all ceremonies, a symbol that will compel truth. But of what importance Ptesanwin or any different messenger who ever comes in answer to a people's command for help?

Recognize the message as the only importance. Message, not messenger; message, not messenger, not pipe or any different symbol; recognize the message as the only importance. And now recognize woman as the one most close to those spirits who seek communication and you will understand why the grandfathers demand that the Shirtman - the spirit-body image for the people - shall become as woman.

Woman, secure of position and pure of blood; woman, keeper of the morality and personification of spiritual strength. Woman, real and unpretentious and on a definite path. And so let the Shirtman understand in what manner he becomes as woman."

Commend from Jared McDonald.

I believe perhaps the exclusion of women in so many Lakotah ceremonies/rites stems from a fear or jealousy of the power woman holds. I think they esteemed the innate power of woman so highly, they couldn't be allowed to roam free with it. A mere touch could render weapons useless if she was on her moon. That's a lot of power to fear. They demand that the highest "office" or position one could hold in the tribe (that of Shirtman) be like that of a woman. Take the attitude of a woman/mother bear/protector. (Can you imagine telling Bill Clinton, "Ok you're President now, you have to act and behave as a woman for the peace and prosperity of the nation!" -:)