

Dea, Rites and Mysteries of the Goddess

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Introduction

The religion of the Goddess centres around the Hearth. Whether this be the inner sun flaming within the matrix of our earth, or the sun itself, this is the source of manifested life. Within the body of all mothers, whether Goddesses, women, female creatures that give birth to egg or seed, the inner fire is the Divine Centre. In this nucleus is our own heart's life, that heart whose rhythmic beating keeps us alive and sets moving the rhythmic Dance of Creation. This Heart-beat of the Cosmos sets moving all heart-beats, even the tiny pulse within a blade of grass. On the earthly level the heart brings life. On other levels it is Love. For the Heart exists on all levels.

Woman is natural Priestess to the Great Goddess, and so presides over the hearth. Wherever any living flame burns, there is the Vestal Fire guarded by Hestia. The tradition in Ireland, and in many countries, is that the hearth fire must never die. At the time of the winter solstice the fire is renewed with embers from the dying fire of Yule. It is woman's task to keep this fire alight. It is man's task to bring her fuel for her task.

To create a shrine to the Goddess there needs to be this matriarchal flame. In any impersonal hotel room, in a town flat, in a small garden, the vestal flame is the same, and gives the same power as that bestowed by the Goddess in the mighty temples of antiquity. This sacred flame may be represented by a lighted candle, an incense stick, a resinous torch or small fire. The smoke represents Air, the holy breath which keeps the fire alive, as does our breath combine with our heart-beats. By the divine law of correspondences, everything material in this world is a symbol for some reality in another sphere. When a fire, candles or incense are burnt with the intention of honouring Deity, a communication centre is created, which forms a link in a golden chain that brings through the fiery power of the Deity invoked.

Having made the centre of our shrine, we need a shell, a Matrix to protect it. In the past this was the duty of the man who built the home or the temple. This Matrix in greater form may be understood to be the darkness of Outer Space which holds galaxies in its embracing blackness. It is the blue atmosphere with fleecy clouds which protects our earthly vegetation as a robe: it is the crust of the earth, a chrysalis that conceals the mystery within. Beneath this rocky shell of earth are two lava flows of magma which, like fiery dragons rotating in contrary directions, protect the golden apples that shine in the glowing heart of our planet. And so also is the Matrix the protecting womb that enfolds the unborn child and small animal: the snake that conceals her eggs within her: the nut shell and husk that guard the living kernel and seed within.

Though we respect great temples, a simple room or grove of trees form a Matrix that protects our altar fire. A shrine may be a psychic temple not made with hands. The Devotee, sitting in silent contemplation, even in a crowded room, may yet build in creative imagination a shrine that guards the privacy of the soul. For the Matrix is not only a womb or shell: it is also the individual aura. We carry our temples about us.

Within the shrine is the resting place of Deity, the Altar. Made of stone or wood, the altar is the throne of Isis, Aset; and the Palladium, the casket of Athena. Here is the meeting place of Deity and Devotee. Here the Goddess or God manifest either through the Hierophant or through all the participants. The elements placed on the altar are an earthly focus where Deity may materialise through earth, air, fire and water; and through oil which represents the blending of the primal four. Any shelf or table in a room may be the

altar, and any quarter or place between the compass points may be used. For each compass point is relevant to the Goddess. On the altar may be offered a stone, a pot plant, incense sticks and a cup of water. Through their hallowing by the Devotee, these are used as a focus for their own true being. The gem of life is in a stone: the divine breath is within smoke: the elixir of life shines through water. Every element, every atom, contains the spark needful for its transmutation.

Through this realisation, the Devotee invokes Deity and through a simple touching of the hands, may awaken the life spark within each object. Earth protects: on another level it represents strength and stability. Fire brings vitality: it also in a greater sphere of being, typifies Love. Air symbolises Mind and Spirit and so must be free to move. Water is so receptive that it must be kept pure and calm, yet flowing. Otherwise, like unhealthy emotions, it may either rage in a storm, or stagnate. Though occult symbolism varies in different systems, the principle remains the same. Any object, however humble, is a key to its essential reality in greater spheres. The purpose of ritual is to strike a note on one level - even with bell, gong or sistrum, and so to awaken the same note on other octaves of being.

When a shrine is awakened through its true keynote and colour, it begins as it were to hum like a well-tuned harp. It is the awareness of the Devotee that brings about this transformation. For the Deities respond to those who knock. They answer. Those seekers who are ready for expansion of consciousness may ease the way to initiation. The Elemental Spirits, the Sidhe, Devis and Devas, will work in harmony with those who treat the elements with respect. No Spirits should be commanded even if this is possible: they come joyfully to those who do the Mothers' work.

The Rites in this Manual start very simply, for one Devotee who may be starting on the Path to the Mysteries, and is alone. Today loneliness is a very unpleasant state of living for many, especially so for those drawn to the occult. In past ages those churchmen and kings who persecuted people with psychic gifts, at least acknowledged these faculties to be real. It is possibly more complimentary if disagreeable to be burnt, drowned or hanged, than to be incarcerated in a mental home as a patient suffering from delusions. Thousands of men and women feel lonely within themselves because they are aware of the psychic sphere, which they long to enjoy - yet dare not, because they fear ridicule or contempt. No one likes to be thought either absurd or mad. The creation of a shrine helps a lonely Devotee to make a stronghold for the soul, where psychic development may take place without disturbance from unsympathetic family or neighbours. This stronghold may be in a small bedroom or garden. All that is essential is the power to make images with the eyes shut, or imagine beautiful words and music, through the creative imagination.

However, actual representations are an aid. A postcard of a Goddess cannot excite comment as can the smell of incense: and who will object to a box of matches and a glass of water? One match flame is sufficient to invoke the element of fire though care is needed when this is done in every sphere. Recorded music also gives wings to the soul, and the reading of written rituals stimulates the spirit.

When regular use of the shrine becomes established, the Devotee experiences the kindness and aid of Spirit Guides and Guardian Angels. Communion with Deity is no longer only a promise: it becomes fact. Now comes a choice. There are those who prefer to follow the solitary path. This is one much prized in Eastern schools. After initial sponsorship by the Guru, the aspirant meditates in solitude. However, it is assumed in these rites of the Fellowship of Isis that our solitary Devotee may want companionship on the Path. Two or three friends gather together, and discover enhanced joy and power through human communion. Experience is gained through discussion and practice. Wider visions are obtained through group meditation and when reports from meditation are shared, a multi-coloured pattern is brought forth, with some strands similar, some differing, but all forming a beautiful and meaningful picture. Guides may vary, nationalities, and even Deities: some participants receive Chinese influence, others are guided from Ancient Egypt or the Devic realms. And as participation continues, the discovery is made that the wiser the Teachers, the more they work in harmony with other Teachers to aid humanity and all life. As greater Teachers make themselves known, they reveal the essential Truths in all religions and philosophies. With them the worth of every path is acknowledged.

What of levels that are less advanced than our own, which may interfere with our work? There is no interference. The less advanced are in touch with us because they need us: and we may need them. Surely we, being unique individuals, have something to offer Deity as gifts, besides hymns of praise and incense. Likewise some unevolved being requiring rescue work may yet have a great deal to teach us.

The Daily Rites are offered in this Liturgy as being helpful for one Devotee, or for two or three people living in the same home. The Seasonal Rites are particularly suitable for groups who can only meet occasionally.

In a Seasonal Rite, the invocation is connected with a special time of year, with the cyclic movements of the celestial bodies and with the climatic changes of the earth. For those living in a town, cut off from nature in her wild form, even the visualising of Stonehenge and the Polar stars at the Winter Solstice brings food for the soul, a reminder of past incarnations, a harmony with nature spirits. When a group gathers for a seasonal festival, even in a small room, affinity is realised with the cosmos. Above is not a mere plaster ceiling with an electric light bulb suspended from it - but the starry glory of the heavens. Behind the television set is the mystery of the setting sun: beyond the radiator is the radiance of the circumpolar stars: by the door may be felt the influence of the centre of our galaxy, near Vega, the Weaver Maid. And mighty Orion is rising below the sitting-room carpet, as he chases Taurus, and in turn is followed by the Star of Isis now below the earth.

This creative use of the divine imagination aids the soul, while the body is passive, and so little change is wrought in the material surroundings, but rather the mind. And this is the spiritual path of development. But when ritual activity is undertaken, power is brought through to the earthly plane. "For Ariadne's nimble feet he made a dancing floor." So wrote Homer of the Dance of the Cretan Labyrinth. In ritual dancing, even a simple circling movement brings through Power. This is like a coiled fiery snake unwinding itself and expressing its vitality through each devotee. So dance the Dervishes, as in widdershin circles they imitate the rotation of the moon, and so attain euphoria. Every dance brings through its own effect on soul and body, and on the surroundings. Ancient singing games of children echo old mystery dances: "In and Out the Dusty Windows", "How Many Miles to Babylon," "Stand the Lady of the Mountain", and "Wallflowers". As our ancestors thread their way through megalithic stone circles to aid fertility and communion with Deities, so children play "Thread the Needle", interweaving through arches by upheld arms.

All the Arts strengthen Ritual and bring about purposeful changes. When ancient liturgies are recited and words of Power uttered, sound reverberates through the centuries, note calling to note. Words are uttered, even in translation, they reiterate those used in temples for thousands of years. In these Rites for the Fellowship of Isis, ancient invocations, hymns and dialogues are used from ancient liturgies from many religions. For the time has come when Iris, the rainbow messenger, is forming a pattern of beauty from many faiths. Communication through new methods of travel, wireless, television, newspapers and books, are forcing people to be aware that the religious horizon is far wider than they had dreamt. No one religious practice can now dominate this earth and force rival faiths to be regarded as heresies. So the wise accept this, and are looking for common point agreement that harmony may be attained. So in these Rites prayers and hymns are used from Karnak, Babylon, Africa, the Norse lands, India, China, Japan, the Celtic countries. For all are relevant, and without one faith the planetary symphony is deficient. We accept the gift of distinctive art and crafts from every country: now we learn to receive with appreciation each religious and esoteric contribution from anywhere on this globe.

Any Rite which invokes Deity or Deities through a Mystery Religion - that which deals with the Unknown - has effect throughout all levels and on the earth itself. Throughout the ages people of varying cultures have learnt to communicate with those from other spheres: we need all the knowledge, understanding and good feeling we can obtain, in order that we may live here in peace with each other with all creatures; and obtain happiness and wisdom in the spheres beyond death.

In these Rites, however, we have used one common factor to give integration: Matriarchal Source, the Mother Goddesses. There is a good reason for this dedication. The Gods or God have been invoked, more and more excluding the Goddesses, during the Iron Age, which has lasted for about three thousand five hundred years. Now this technological analytical period is being replaced by the Sub-atomic or Space Age. And this more and more involves the apparently supernatural "aether", only now being photographed by particularly refined instruments. To protect life on this planet, it is essential that balance be restored to our world, particularly in the West, where there is the most dangerous concentration on Mars-Saturn or male aggressive power. The psychic and emotional attractiveness of the Goddesses is needed to quieten Mars and make Saturn gentle. When a species is in danger of annihilation, meaningful mutation may take place. This transformation is voluntarily being undertaken by those who follow the occult path. To hasten this process, activity is enjoyed that blends the psychic with the physical: ritual movement which uses all the arts may achieve this new mystical awareness.

A spiral procession slowly and surely winding its way through a garden inwards towards a temple blends two spheres, the earthly and the psychic. After such a ceremony, the garden or field has a different, more psychically alive atmosphere, which may be felt even by those unacquainted with the occult. The wearing of robes and regalia, the playing of musical instruments, enhance the effect. However, if neighbours may wonder when they hear chanting, the clash of cymbals, the eerie notes of the flute and the rattle of the sistrum, all that is needed is a quiet walk around the garden in everyday clothes. During this silent walk, thoughts are sent forth to bless plants and the earth. The procession then winds inwards to the hall door and so within to the shrine. So is the outer acknowledged and blended with the inner. After the Rite within the shrine, which brings through the Power needed for the good purpose of the ceremony, it is needful that the procession should return out-of-doors, preferably in a contrary spiral movement. This return is not to inhibit the Power, nor to dispense with the aid of those elemental and other Beings who have chosen to join in the ceremony. It is to disperse the power outwards so that it may radiate blessing to the whole neighbourhood and the surrounding plants, earth and streams.

It is good when performing Rites and Mysteries to use actual earth, plants, water, fire and oil. But these may be symbolised or have a very simple representation. The elements of water and fire in a garden may fittingly be shown as an unobtrusive bucket of water and small bonfire.

A Rite starts with an Invocation to Deity, and ends with Thanksgiving to the Deity so invoked. The Thanksgiving includes an acceptance of the aid received; and this is brought about by conscious awareness of the good given. So often we pray for something and then forget all about it. For seven or nine days, after a Rite, those who have taken part do well to watch possible effects. Enhanced consciousness can, after all, only take place when we are aware that this is happening to us. The aura around trees and plants may become apparent: new vitality is felt not only with the participants but with their friends: healing may occur in the neighbourhood.

Cats particularly enjoy ritual; but other animals and birds attain benefit. For in the true world of perfection where they eternally belong, the cat plays with mice and the mice tempt them to such play, which in the psychic worlds is not followed by pain and death. A lion indeed lies down with a lamb, for Nature, which shows herself red in tooth and claw on this plane, in the inner spheres shows a lovelier face. Death through being eaten is transformed into ecstasy through surrender: killing becomes a desire to enfold and love: hunger for power is truly the longing to encompass others in a unifying embrace. Even the most perverted of desires are a reflection of some need that is essentially good. Ritual brings about this affinity with the real world by using its own symbols. Having seen the Real, the devotee can make good the reflection. No participant is ever entirely the same after truly enjoying divine communion.

In Rites and Ceremonies, the Deities bestow food and drink, blessings and aid. These are for all. But the Mysteries go further. These are for those who are ready for a greater development in true Being. And

such a development cannot be brought about by any ceremony: but a ceremony prepares the soul and personality for that which may come about. This can be in the flash of a second: as one foot is lifted to take a step: between two words: it comes as unexpectedly as death: as swiftly as love: and is as fruitful.

The Mysteries here presented in new form are among the most ancient known to the human race. Any of these Mysteries may be used for Initiation: for a change of state. Such a Rite can therefore be used as requiem or funeral for one who has entered the world of Spirit: for any candidate who aspires to enter into deeper consciousness: for a Marriage of Twin Souls: for the hollowing of a baby newly entered into our world: these Mysteries are relevant to all changes of awareness.

The Drama of Isis and Osiris used to be enacted for the Egyptian people in the Outer Courts of the Egyptian Temples, and so appealed to the simplest. Yet to understand this Myth requires knowledge beyond the human. For every Mystery expresses itself on many levels, according to the perception of the participants. On the surface, the story of Isis, Osiris and Set is a detective story, a thriller. Osiris is murdered and his wife, aided by a clever friend, has to find the fragments of his body. In this folk history about a good Egyptian King and Queen and wicked brother, the virtuous are rewarded and the villain punished by the King and Queen's heir, Horus. The story resembles those mysteries performed outside mediaeval cathedrals where Judas is given the red hair of Set. Even comic interludes are enjoyed. This comic necessity, the perception of the incongruity of interacting levels, was accepted by the Greeks, but by them relegated to a farcical epilogue, distinct from the central drama. But in the ancient Babylonian drama of Ishtar, the Goddess has humorous dialogue with Neti, Gate-keeper of the Underworld - when she threatens to break down the door if he refuses her admittance. But as humankind become more intellectually obstruct, and hence further from nature, humour was regarded as irreverent, so by the time we reach Greek Mysteries, we are permitted no humour: comedy is fenced off as a necessary if vulgar catharsis.

As the Mysteries became more philosophical, other levels of understanding, once the secret knowledge of initiated priests, became more widely known. Hence the coffin made by Set for Osiris was understood to be the human body. The fragments of the murdered Pharaoh were seen to be the Nomes of Egypt, or as the scattered fragments of uninitiated humanity. Through this comprehension of archetypal symbols, Isis was no longer a mere loving Queen, but was a feminine archetype of wifely devotion. But as this identification of the Virtues and Qualities with relevant Gods and Goddesses made the Deities more sublime, more suitable as objects of worship for the educated - so also it made them less real. For if Isis be not a real woman, or Osiris and Set real men, what relevance have they for us, save as personifications of abstract qualities? Why not respect the qualities and avoid the vices - without presenting these with human or animal faces?

Hence Religion became divided into Philosophy, where abstract thought prevailed: and a theurgic practice for the people who still wanted aid and communion with Deities. Obviously then, the mass of people wanted a real carpenter's family in Nazareth, rather than archetypal beings whom they were told were not real. The cult of saints brought them the kindly help and warmth from beings living in a better, kinder world beyond the grave. Saints took on the same work as Gods and Goddesses, as they too dwelt in the psychic sphere, yet could affect the material world.

So the Mysteries were divided, as human consciousness turned to intellectuality. The drama, whether Greek, or later European plays, dwelt more and more with human problems. The Mysteries of religion had but one channel: the Mass. Only secret esoteric Orders retained the ancient theurgic dramas. These are not secular dramas. The Mysteries are a means of grace whereby the Devotee, either through identification or through worship, attains harmony, even communion with Deity. Finally, latent divinity is awakened in the daughters and sons of the Divine Ones.

On studying these ancient Mysteries, it would seem at first that there is only one neophyte or possibly two in each drama. It is Osiris who dies and is resurrected, and hence is the candidate for Initiation.

Psyche and Demophoon learn needful lessons from their tutelary Deities: Theseus is guided through the labyrinth by the Priestess Ariadne.

But on closer examination, we realise that the Deities too may expand their individual consciousness through relationship with those less advanced than themselves. In Indian drama, the God Krishna learns compassion for humans and animals from the mortal man Arjuna. For as each being is a particular manifestation of the all pervading Divine Reality, so each creature is necessary to bring harmony to the whole. Therefore even a mighty Being may learn from a lesser creature, and so discover new joy. For there is no greater or lesser in qualities: there is a difference in quantity only. Hence Demeter herself the Great Goddess, learns to share her daughter with Hades. Hades likewise returns Persephone to her mother. According to one Greek source, this is for half a year. But according to another version, more subtle, Persephone's yearly cycle is divided into three: one with her Mother, one with Hades in the Underworld, and a third with her friends on earth.

There is a resemblance in this drama of the two Goddesses with Shakespeare's "Tempest", and with Mozart's opera, "The Magic Flute." We have a girl, symbol of the human soul, with a Mother Goddess and Father God as parents. Mother and Father are separated from each other. In the Greek myth, it is the Father who is terrifying, the Mother who is good. As Patriarchy more and more prevailed in the West, we find a new bias centuries later in the Shakespeare play. The mother hardly exists, or is represented by an evil witch, Sycorax. The father is a puritanical authoritarian magician who exploits the Elemental Spirits, and the indigenous natives of the island where he is in exile. The plot of the "Magic Flute" has first an opposing significance. The Mother, The Queen of Night, was originally good: the Priest Sarastro, evil. But owing to a similar story being on the stage of the period, this plot was reversed. It is interesting that in the modern Ingmar Bergman film of the opera, this rendering is taken to extremes. The Queen of Night is shown as a demonically possessive mother using her daughter to murder her father. The father is portrayed as a righteous patriarch wearing a black cassock, and is head of a secret Order of Protestant occultists with puritanical outlook. Naturally the closing chorus: "Oh Isis and Osiris" is omitted. It is a Scandinavian divorce problem drama, with the Father given custody of a rather weak-brained daughter and weaker hero. The Iron Age expresses itself in this Nordic version as totally hostile to the Mother Goddess, and committed to a totalitarian Patriarch. Persephone as the daughter is in obscurity. Humble, submissive, only obedient to the Father, enduring attacks from his unpleasant servant, she needs rescue from her sisters, the Valkyrie!

How poor a drama is this, compared to the "Mystery of Demeter and Persephone!" It is to the ancient myth we must return, for integrity. The threefold nature of the Goddesses and ourselves is shown as the Olympian Goddess, the ruler, the creatrix: the laughing maiden of the flowery fields of art and nature: and the Queen of the Mysteries, the dark Enchantress of Hades. During the Iron Age only one archetype was revered and held up to women for emulation; the receptive Virgin, or the kindly Virgin-Mother, who only aided humanity through supplication to the All-Father. Yet when women did follow this ideal, admiration was only given to the youthful maidens: when they aged they were "old Maids", "spinsters". For uneducated and powerless, and often without financial stability, what had they, but their meek devotions?

Yet how powerful are the true Spinsters, the Eumenides: these Rites invoke the Fates, the Eumenides, Queens of the Underworld. For the dark powers of the Mothers are not to be feared: but they are to be respected. From the black earth grows the fruitful grain, and the tree of life that holds the brightly winged birds yet grows from the ground. No longer need humans suffer from shame of their earthy roots. None need dread old age, or ignore the natural needs within their bodies. But if women have been taught to be ashamed of the dark Mother within, and to fear the Enchantress that brings psychic gifts; men have been balked of the spiritual heritage by being taught to be ashamed of sensitivity, of love of the arts, psychism, of tenderness and care for children and animals and plants. An unnatural over-developed refinement in women, and a brutalising "toughness" in men denied both sexes a natural completion:

denied one side of the brain, one hand, one foot. We need both our hands, both sides of our brains, and both soul and body, that we may enjoy our true selves.

Those who identify with various Goddesses and Gods, who revere and love them, will find integration of consciousness. For there is a Deity for every person, whether humorous, grave, joyful, lively, strong or gentle. Not only is each person represented by a Deity; the ideal lover is also present: for Isis has ten thousand names, and Osiris ten thousand faces. Eros is seen as Love, yet coloured by race, family, feature, according to the devotion of Psyche. And Psyche appears to the Lover with the form and beauty that is for him alone. So Deity is to be sought in meditation: loved in those we know: and discovered through the Mysteries. This is the dark secret of the Underworld: this is the enigma of the Labyrinth. It is a secret that is told by all teachers. It is a spoken secret. Yet words may tell: a sphinx portray: yet only when the secret is experienced is it known. An ear of barley is reaped in Silence.

May those who enact these Rites attain their true being.

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