

Sphinx, Goddess Myths and Mysteries

By: Olivia Robertson

2. VENUS. THE ROC'S EGG.

ORACLE OF THE GODDESS ALLAT

Invocation: Lion Headed Goddess of Nature, who presides over the destiny of all creatures, be with us, be for us, be within us.

Oracle of Allat:

"Within the deepest caverns I am found
When hope has fled and only death is near.
In vengeance and the cruel rage of war;
In the heart's breaking my soft voice is there.

Yet am I in the smiling eyes of love
And in the hopeful dreams of every of every bride
Each star my veil surrounds with darkest night
Yet clothed in soft doves' feathers I abide.

Do not entangle me with probing thoughts,
But in my warm embrace of dreams you fall.
Awaken! In the sleep of death I come,
And bring each soul to paradise for all."

Priest Hierophant: Companions, we are assembled in this Holy Temple to unveil the source of our existence. (*offers incense.*) I offer incense to Allat, Mother of us all.

Priestess Hierophant. (*offers incense*): I offer incense to Allah, the Cosmic Creator.

1st Priestess. (*anoints each brow with water*): May the divine spark of truth shine within you!

2nd Priestess (*lights lamp on altar.*): The sacred flame cannot burn without the oil of love.

1st Priest: Divine reality can best be experienced not through analysis, but through sympathy. Let us enjoy and suffer with the characters in the well-beloved story of Aladdin and his wonderful lamp!

PLAY: ALADDIN AND HIS WONDERFUL LAMP.

SCENE 1.

A gong sounds on a table with a copper lamp. Enter Rumi in Arabian Costume.

Rumi: Friends, I am Jalal al-Din Rumi. I shall be your guide. Behold, you shall witness the double Heaven, and behold the Three divine Wielders of Kismet: Khalq, Bari and Musawwir.

Enter three women in black wearing gold masks. They seat themselves on thrones.

Khalq: I am Khalq, Divine Logos, the Conceiver of Possibilities. I offer sacred wisdom to the questing soul, in choice between good and evil.

Bari: I am Bari, the Divine Logos, Who bringeth forth the word. Mine is the voice that calls the soul to redemption.

Musawwir: I am Musawwir, the Divine Logos, Who bringeth forth the spirit into myriad forms.

Khalq: It is not through watching multitudes that we judge humanity, but through understanding the joys and suffering people. Once more Adam and Eve are brought to trial!

Bari: I have selected the wastrel son of an Arabian tailor to be the Mystical Bridegroom, and the rebellious daughter of a King in China to be the Mystical Bride.

Musawwir: Through their union, if they survive the ordeals of initiation, shall a nobler humanity be born.

Khalq: Let the black Eblis conduct the ordeals, while Rumi shall be the guiding angel.

Exeunt.

SCENE 2. A HUT IN ARABIA.

Enter Rumi and Aladdin.

Rumi: You have heard my teachings. You are willing to be initiated?

Aladdin: I quote your own words:

"I died from mineral and plant become;
Died from the plant, and took a sentient frame;
Died from the beast, and donned a human dress;
When by dying did I e'er grow less?
Another time from manhood I must die,
To soar with angel pinions to the sky."

Rumi: Angel pinions indeed! You'll need to mend your ways and stop this merry making in taverns. Why fate should choose you, a dissolute, idle fellow to be a Magus is beyond me.

Aladdin: For the same reason you were chosen! You went your own way, oblivious to what the neighbours said. So they tore you to pieces. And before they did it, you told them that each piece would be God. And so they multiplied their "Heretic".

Rumi: None the less, those lost pieces of Adam's body must be restored.

"Come, you lost atoms, to your Centre draw,
And be that eternal mirror that you saw;
Rays that wandered into Darkness wide
Return, and back into your Sun subside."

Aladdin: I accept the challenge. On your head be it.

Enter Aladdin's Mother, angry.

Mother: Aladdin, our larder is bare! Why won't you work at your father's trade?

Aladdin: I'll get food now - I'll pay my flute in the bazaar. . .

Three knocks on door. Aladdin opens it. Enter Eblis richly dressed as African Magician. He kisses ground.

Eblis: Blessed earth! I return to my father's house bearing rich gifts, and to make my beloved brother's only son my heir!

Mother: You are welcome! You are come in time to persuade my idle son to follow your brother's trade and be a tailor.

Aladdin: I won't make clothes. Let men and women walk naked as they were born. That is their proper attire.

Mother: You disgrace us before your noble Uncle. You would unveil women - that is blasphemy.

Aladdin: I would gladly unveil a princess - if she were worth seeing.

Eblis: (*laughing*) My ideal apprentice. (*to Mother*) Know that I am the celebrated Magician of Africa, versed in Egyptian, Syrian and Indian magic. I can bring your son priceless treasure!

Mother: I do not trust you - you fill me with terror. (*Flees.*)

Aladdin: Quite the contrary - you fill me with longing. Teach me your forbidden arts.

Exeunt.

SCENE 3. THE CAVERN OF TREASURES.

Rumi: So Eblis took Aladdin to a desert and between rocks he lowered him into a cavern.

Enter Aladdin: What a cavern is this, overflowing with gold ornaments and precious stones of every colour.

Eblis (*from above*): My dear nephew, you may keep all the jewels. Just hand up to me a small copper lamp on a shelf on your left. I may not take it myself. Just hand it up to me. . .

Aladdin: There is a trick in this. My mother was right - she usually is.
"A little lamp in thy possession,
Throws a feeble light on the fringe of gloom.
At night death's Angel comes,
And stooping o'er thy bed,
Puts out the light:
Then by his hand he leadeth thee
Into far and distant lands."

What are all these compared to the hope of magical journeys to far-off lands! (*calls up to Eblis*) Uncle, you can have all this treasure. I shall keep this lamp!

Gong strokes.

Eblis: Then stay in the depths forever.

Rumi: So Eblis covered the entrance and Aladdin saw that his fate would be slow starvation followed by death. He lay there for 2 days and nights. On the third morning he rubbed the lamp by mistake - and a mighty Djinn appeared.

Gong. Enter Djinn.

Djinn: I am yours to command, bound as I am to this lamp. Shall I kill the Magician of Africa for you? He has tried to murder you.

Aladdin: What good would a dead body be to me - I want no revenge. Grant me my fondest dream: to unveil a Princess!

Djinn: Your word is my command.

Exeunt.

SCENE 4. THE ROYAL BATHS, CHINA.

Rumi: So when the Djinn had brought food and coins to Aladdin's mother, he transported the young man to China. There he concealed him within the sanctum of the Princess Heng O's bath. The Princess appeared, with her maidens, all veiled.

Music. Dance of the veiled maidens. They leave the Princess alone. Aladdin leaps out and kneels before her.

Aladdin: You are no mortal but an houri of paradise! Your dancing was as lovely as the flight of a dove. But your face is concealed, as is the moon by floating clouds. Let me draw aside your veil even if I should die for my temerity.

Princess: Are you an angel with your great wild eyes and long white limbs? Surely I may unveil to an angel. If Kismet permits, you may see my face.

Aladdin (*draws aside Princess's veil*): You are the Princess of the Moon in all her golden glory.

Princess: It is for you, an angel, that I refused all suitors! You have my heart.

They embrace.

Rumi: The Djinn provided the King, Heng O's father, with so much treasure that he forgave his daughter her disobedience, and accepted this unknown youth as her husband. And husband and wife dwelt happily in a magnificent pagoda with extensive gardens, filled with roses and doves.

SCENE 5. THE RESPLENDENT PAGODA.

Rumi and Princess enter.

Rumi: Princess Heng O, you have followed my teachings with sincerity. Are you willing to be initiated?

Princess: My soul would return home.

"The dove came upon me from regions above,
That exalted, ineffable, glorious heavenly dove.
T'was concealed from the eyes of all those who would ken,
Yet she wears not a veil, is apparent to men.

She is held from seeking the lofty and spacious sky,
Until, when the hour of homeward flight draws nigh,
She sings for joy, for the veil is raised, and she spies
Such things as cannot be witnessed by mortal eyes."

I gladly accept any trials that are put before me.

Rumi: On your head be it.

Exeunt.

Rumi: Some time later, when the Princess had partly forgotten her initiation, one of her ladies came as she sat in her pagoda.

Lady: Your Highness, there is a mad peddler out there in the courtyard! He is actually offering new lamps for old.

Princess: How curious. Call him before me.

Enter Eblis (as peddler): Great Princess, I offer you a golden lamp as a humble gift to Beauty. All I request in return is the little copper lamp in your noble husband's library.

Princess: (*laughing*) So you are this cunning magician who tried to murder my husband. You must think me a fool to hand over his lamp, from which we have gained our pagoda and gardens!

Eblis (*throws off disguise*): What does this tailor's son offer you but a boring domestic existence, collecting artistic trifles? Be my partner and you shall be Queen of the World.

Princess: Take the magic lamp! Aladdin and I shall not let our souls be corrupted by unhallowed magic. Leave your gold lamp. I choose my home to the world.

Exit Eblis with copper lamp.

Rumi: Princess Heng O had passed her first test, and after a while she and Aladdin were reconciled to the loss of the lamp, and dwelt happily in their palace. But one day she received an important visitor.

Enter the holy woman Fatima and Princess.

Princess: I am deeply honoured by a visit from the renowned Holy Woman Fatima. Although worldly possessions do not interest you, do you enjoy the artistic beauty of our pagoda?

Fatima: In every way the design and orientation of each object both delight and instruct. But forgive my saying it - your pagoda lacks one thing.

Princess: And what is that?

Fatima: It is a giant egg laid by the mighty Roc!

Princess: What makes it so essential?

Fatima: Harken to what is within the egg.

"In its every atom are a hundred blazing suns.
If you cleave the heart of one drop of water
A hundred pure oceans emerge from it.
If you examine closely each grain of sand,
A hundred Adams may be seen in it.
The heart of a head of corn equals to a hundred harvests:
A world dwells within the heart of a millet seed.
In the wing of a gnat is the ocean of Life:
In the pupil of the eye, a Heaven."

Princess: I would give all I have for this wonder!

Fatima: So be it. But be warned - you will lose all your riches, both you and your husband. (*Exit.*)

Princess: I have made up my mind, I shall own this egg - whatever the consequences. I shall use my magic ring to summon its Djinneya! (*Rubs ring.*)

Gong. Enter Djinneya.

Djinneya: What does the Princess command?

Princess: This pagoda lacks one thing. Bring me a Roc's egg!

Djinneya (*flies into a rage*): Foolish woman, do you demand the source of all the race of Djinnns - to ornament your ridiculous pagoda? (*Gong.*) Lo! Your pagoda and garden and your treasure have vanished. You shall have your egg. (*Exit.*)

Enter Aladdin: What has happened? Are we caught by a tornado?

Princess: O Dearest husband, this is my doing. I gave away all we had for a Roc's egg. . . (*looks wildly around*) Where is it?

Enter Fatima (*laughing*): Ignorant Princess - the Roc's egg is within yourself! You are with child.

Rumi: And Aladdin and Heng O embraced each other with joy, for each had received their dearest wish. From henceforth they lived happily in a reed hut by the seashore. Aladdin earned their bread by fishing from a boat, while Heng O mended his nets. And their child became a Light for the whole earth.

Gong. End of Play.

Meditation.

Rays of happiness and love are sent forth. Reports. Thanks are given to the Deities.

End of Rite.

Sources: "The Arabian Nights", trans. Forster, William Miller, 1810. "Sufi, Expressions of the Mystic Quest", Laleh Bakhtiar, Thames and Hudson. "Mystic Lyrics of the Middle Ages", Paul Alfeus, Allen and Unwin. "Goddesses of India, Tibet, China and Japan", Durdin-Robertson, Cesara.

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