

# LESSON IV

## THE ALTAR



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The main purpose of an altar is to provide focus.

It can be used to focus on the Divine Powers - this is worship.

It can be used to focus energy for making changes in our lives -this is magic.

It can be used to focus on communication with our Higher Selves and **SPIRIT GUIDES** -this is meditation.

All of these -worship, magic, meditation -are ways of focusing our psychic energy to accomplish specific ends. The altar can aid in that focus, and can be used to augment that energy and enhance the result.

Because so much of this process depends on the energy of YOU, your altar should be so designed as to have meaning for YOU and to provoke an emotional and spiritual reaction from you. This is particularly important because no matter how beautiful or "correct" your altar is, it won't matter to you if it doesn't help you access your own inner energies.

Altars have many variations. The simplest altar need be no more than a picture on the wall or a clear space on a table. The most elaborate altars are masterpieces of exquisite art. Most altars are somewhere in between.

In this lesson you will learn how to construct a basic altar, which you can then adapt to your personal needs -at which you can do magic, work ritual, and commune with the Powers That Be.

### GEOMANCY

Your first consideration is where to put your altar.

Most people put their altar in their bedroom. this makes it a very personal space, and assures privacy. This is especially good if you live in a home with non-Pagan roommates or family who might be intimidated by a holy object such as an altar in the living room.

If however your home is wholly Pagan, you may wish a more public altar in a living room, or a special temple room, at which your whole family can worship.

If you do this, you will probably still want a personal altar in your bedroom to use privately, which is attuned solely to your own energies.

In this way you can enjoy with your family the best aspects of both personal and communal religious devotion.

Once you've decided what room to put your altar in, you must decide where in the room to put it.

For many this is an easy decision -if you have only three feet of open wall space in your room and no way to rearrange it otherwise, obviously the altar will go in that three feet.

But if you have more than one choice available to you, you will wish to consult the principles of **GEOMANCY**.

Geomancy is the art of reading the Earth's energies and aligning ourselves and our works to them - and through them to the energies of the Universe as well.

Geomancy is an ancient art in all parts of the world. Different peoples have developed different ideas about it, depending on the needs of their differing cultures. In Asia it is called **FENG SHUI**, and this form of Geomancy has become quite popular lately.

The idea of Geomancy like so many other things in magic comes from the ancient maxim of Hermes Trismagistus: "As Above, So Below." That is to say, the idea that the essential nature of the Universe will be reflected in all of Her parts, no matter how great or small.

The main principles of western Geomancy are exemplified by the Magic Circle. Briefly, the direction of East is creativity and new beginnings. South is action and manifestation. West is emotion and the subconscious. North is wisdom. Everything that is Above or goes to the right (**DEOSIL**) is connected to the God, to matter, and to physical manifestation.

Everything that is Below or that goes to the left (**TUATHAIL**, or less correctly "Widdershins") is connected to the Goddess, to spirit, and to cleansing. You will learn more about this in **LESSON V**.

Your altar may be aligned to any direction whose qualities you desire to draw upon, but it is traditional -and generally best for the beginner- to place the altar toward the North. North is the Direction of wisdom and understanding, where the qualities of the other directions are integrated and learned from. Placing the altar in the North will help you to align yourself to wisdom and integration, and help you to bring these qualities to your magical and meditative practice.

Your altar itself also has a geomancy to consider.

The right side of the altar is warm. It is associated with the God, the Sun, Day, physical energy, and the elements of Air and Fire.

The left side of the altar is cool. It is associated with the Goddess, the Moon and Stars, spiritual energy and magic, and with the elements of Water and Earth.

The middle of the altar is associated with Spirit, or Primeval Deity, Who is within both Goddess and God, as well as all other things.

The back part of this middle area is associated with Primeval Deity, that aspect of the Goddess that existed before the creation of the God, and might be described as the Higher Self of the Universe. Hear is the Divine plan, the blueprint of the Universe which is mirrored in every aspect of creation. This is the soul of Deity, which is expressed in many different faces. This is often the focal point of the altar, where Deity is honored in whatever form is being invoked at the time.

The front part of the middle space represents spiritual energy manifesting in the physical world -the union of Goddess and God in the ongoing process of creation. This is where your magical working will be

done. This area is normally left empty when work is not being done.

### CREATING YOUR ALTAR

Before you set up your altar, you will want to purify and bless your altar space.

Magic is the focusing of spiritual energy, and spiritual energy is constantly being effected by the actions and emotions of people. Consequently it needs to be purified or cleansed -to have the residues of emotions and actions removed, so that energy can be refocused and re-directed. You will remember that this spiritual energy, which comes from the Goddess, suffuses all people and things and is the basis of existence; it is directed and shaped by concentrated thought, emotion, and physical action.

Once you have cleansed the energy you may proceed to assemble your altar. This is best done immediately after the cleansing, and you should have all the necessary pieces nearby before hand.

You will find a basic space cleansing ritual in the **SPELL OF THE MONTH** section of this lesson, which you may use to prepare your altar space to receive your altar.

### ALTAR TABLE

The **ALTAR TABLE** is the surface upon which your altar is set up. It is not necessarily a table as such, but can be any of a wide variety of surfaces.

Traditionally altars have often been erected out-of-doors. They still are at ritual gatherings and for certain observances. In this circumstance the altar is often placed directly on the ground or upon a log or boulder. This is the ideal, connecting directly with Mother Earth and through Her the Universe.

In this same spirit your indoor altar table is best made of wood or stone (as marble, for instance). Metal is not considered desirable, for the horizontal surface at least -though the altar table may stand on metal legs and often includes metal components.

Most commonly an ordinary piece of household furniture is used for the altar table, to conserve space. Many people set up their altars on their bedroom dresser top, or on a nightstand. Some people use the top shelf of a bookcase, showing reverence for knowledge.

Some people, to maintain an even closer link with Earth, will place a bowl or box lined with soil on their altar table and assemble their altar in this -though this is an unusual practice. More commonly a jar or bowl of Earth will be kept ON the altar for the same reason, rather than being used AS the altar.

### ALTAR CLOTH

You may want to use an **ALTAR CLOTH**. This is an ancient tradition arising from the time when all cloth was hand-woven and precious, and any type of embroidery a luxury.

Today altar cloths are used because of their beauty and capacity for symbolism. Details of color and



Altar belonging to Rev. Don Lewis. Note use of wooden bookcase as altar table.

(Artwork reprinted from the *Wheel of Hekate* #3, Samhain '87)

decoration can greatly influence the flavor and energy of the altar. If you wish to use an altar cloth you will want to consider these details when choosing it.

If you are able, decorate the altar cloth yourself, with embroidery or fabric paint, using symbols that have relevance to your personal philosophy and relationship with Deity. This will bond it to you and fill it with your energy. Concentrate on positive, self-empowering thoughts as you work, so that the cloth will be imbued with these and radiate them back to you during ritual and magical working.

If you prefer a less handmade altar cloth for any reason, choose a cloth that resonates strongly with you. An heirloom, a treasured gift, or a cloth that puts you in mind of your hopes and dreams.

To prepare the altar cloth for the altar, you will want to consecrate it. Do this by holding the cloth in your hands. Say "I send out from this cloth any negativity which may lie within it" or words to that effect, and visualize the cloth flooded with a strong yellow light, which passes through it carrying out all impurities. Then say something like "I do bless and consecrate this cloth to my altar that it may aid me in my workings and my growth" and visualize a clear blue-white light coming down from above and filling the cloth until it glows with white light like the Moon. Use this same basic technique to consecrate the altar pieces described below as well.

## ALTAR PIECES

Of your altar pieces the most important will be these: candles, incense, water, and salt. These represent the four **Elements**, which are considered the building blocks of creation. You will learn more about the four Elements in **LESSON V**.

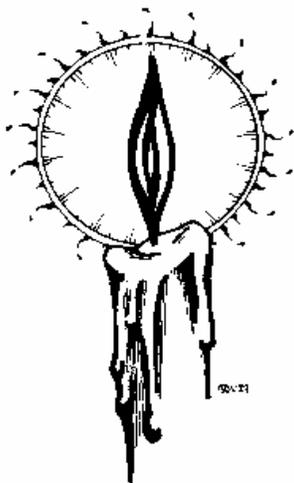
Of course you will also need matches or a lighter (or as we call it, the sacred lighting instrument). Strictly speaking it is preferable to have matches or lighter that are used only for the altar, and for no other purpose -but this is not always practical, and a household lighter will do if necessary.

You will also keep your **MAGICAL TOOLS** on the altar, but you will not learn about these until **LESSON V**, so we will leave off discussion of them until then.

## CANDLES

Candles represent Fire, and are often the most visible element on an altar.

Candles have always been used on altars; either actual candles, or torches, or oil lamps. In earlier times a bonfire might be



built, which would serve as the "candle" and also as the actual "altar" itself. Sometimes this is still done in outdoor ritual.

Since the earliest times the presence of fire in Pagan ritual has been of extreme importance. Fire represents the God (as you should remember from **LESSON II**), and when you light a flame you are repeating the Goddess' act of First Creation. Each ritual then begins with the symbolic re-enactment of the First Creation when the candles are lit. The candle flame bursts forth from darkness, even as the God burst forth from the Goddess in an explosion of flame and light.

Moreover, flame generates energy. Each candle that you light puts out energy of its own, which will add to your working; it acts as a kind of "battery" raising the available energy level, and increasing your ability. This is why you sometimes see so many candles burning at once on an altar.

You can add to this effect by imagining a ball of white light around the flame when you light your candle -this increases the energy the flame puts out. Imagine the ball of light expanding out from the flame for several inches. When you put out the candle, imagine the ball of light shrinking down and disappearing. You can use the ball of light without the flame too, but if you do make sure you remember to shrink it down when your done.

You may also wish to "dress" your candles before you use them. This does not mean putting little clothes on them. You dress a candle with essential oil. The most common reason to dress a candle is to do **CANDLE MAGIC**, about which you will learn more later. But some people like to dress candles whenever they use them. Dressing a candle gives you a chance to focus on the candle and put energy into it, "programming" it for the purpose it will be used for. By doing this you imprint your **INTENT** upon it, and cause it to focus naturally upon what you are trying to do. Then when the candle burn, the energy it generates will already be programmed for your purpose.

To dress a candle you take an appropriate essential oil (say lavender for a purification, or sandalwood for general ritual) and put a little in the palm of your left hand. Now rub your two hands together so that they are coated with the oil. As you rub your hands together, visualize white light shining out from between them, and see this white light expand and grow into a ball of light around your hands. Now take up your candle, holding it by the middle. Slowly work the oil up toward the top of the candle, and down toward the bottom, a little bit at a time. As you do this, imagine the candle filling with white light, and concentrate upon what it is you wish to do with this candle. The harder you concentrate, the more you will impress your intent upon the candle. Coat the whole candle with oil, including the wick.

As the candle burns it will release energy imprinted with your intent, as well as the scent of the oil it has been dressed with.



Altar belonging to Rev. Krystel High-Correll.  
(Artwork reprinted from *Wheel of Hekate* #3, Samhain '87)

The number and color of candles you want on your altar is entirely up to you. A chart of colors and their meanings is included to help you choose. You will want to do this carefully as it adds a great deal to the atmosphere and energy of your altar.

Beeswax candles are considered preferable and some people go so far as to make their own - infusing the candles strongly with their personal energy by doing so. But in practice most people buy regular candles at the local store, and they work perfectly well.

Some people use only a single candle on their altar, to represent Spirit, or Primordial Deity. Or they might use a single candle to represent only that aspect of Deity which they are invoking at the moment.

Some people use a matched or contrasting pair to represent Goddess and God -Spirit and Matter, Death and Life: the great Duality Whose interaction forms the Universe as we know it. These candles might be in any of a number of color combinations used to represent Goddess and God, including Black and White, Silver (white or gray) and Gold (yellow), Green and Red, Indigo and Yellow, and so on. In such an arrangement the Goddess candle goes to the left, the God candle to the right, in keeping with the Geomancy of the altar as discussed above. Sometimes a Spirit candle is placed between them to symbolize Their inner Unity.

You might want to use altar candles to symbolize the Four Elements in elemental colors, or the three phases of the Goddess, or whatever conveys the idea of holiness to you, and helps you to make the magical shift in consciousness.

You may want to include a special candle to honor your **ANCESTORS** (whether by blood or affinity) or your Spirit Guides.

Also, many magical workings require special candles that will only be used for that working. These candles will be on your altar for anywhere from a few minutes to few weeks, depending on the working.

So you can see why candles are such an

important part of the altar.

When you finish a magical working, do not blow your candles out -use a candle snuffer, your fingers, or a magical blade. This is to make sure that the candle goes out the first time as it is a bad omen to do otherwise.

In general you may use as many candles on your altar as you wish, in colors that have significance to you. Even the guidelines we have outlined here are just that -guidelines. If you feel strongly that you should arrange your candles in a way that is not consonant with the geomancy we have discussed, you should listen to your intuition and do as it tells you.

Candles help to raise energy, so the more the merrier -just be careful not to set yourself on fire!

Candles can also be used to represent the Fifth Element -Spirit. In this aspect the wax represents Spirit, the flame represents the body/physical existence. Thus the Spirit (wax) feeds the body (flame). And just as the candle can be re-lit any number of times, so too we see that the soul passes through any number of bodies.

## INCENSE

**Incense** represents the element of Air.

Incense may be of any sort -stick, cone, oil, or powder.

But remember -in some rituals you may have to pick the incense up -so choose an incense or an incense burner which allows for this. I have vivid memories of impulsively picking up my grandmother's metal tripod burner by the bowl when it was hot, rather than by the legs as it was meant to be lifted -don't make the same mistake!

With stick incense lifting is no problem, and it is easy to light -hence its popularity. But it lacks the drama of powdered incense burned over charcoal.

In recent years "smudge sticks" -loose bundles of dried aromatic plant material, usually sage, cedar, or lavender- have become popular as a kind of stick incense, but if you choose to use these, be aware that they tend to send off sparks, which can be dangerous.

If you are going to use cone or powdered incense you will want to use either a standing incense burner, or a hanging **THURIBLE** on a chain.

If you're sensitive to smoke there are also non-combustible forms of incense, notably essential oil. Essential oil comes in all of the same fragrances as combustible incense, and indeed is often used in their manufacture. To use essential oil in place of incense, a small quantity can be dropped into a candle flame, even as powdered incense might be dropped upon hot charcoal.

If you are truly sensitive to scent, you can also use more symbolic forms of incense such as a cinnamon stick, or a sprig of some aromatic plant such as sage, which can be waved over the candle instead of added to the flame. Feathers fans are often used to fan the smoke of combustible incense, but can also be used in its place to simply fan the flame of a candle in a

symbolic manner.

You will want to place the incense to the right of your altar. Later you will learn how to use it more specifically, but for now just enjoy its scent and let it help you to achieve the magical shift in consciousness.

## WATER AND SALT

The elements of Water and Earth are represented on the altar by water and salt. These are often placed in matching bowls, as they are commonly mixed in ritual.

The salt is preferably sea salt -and it can be particularly nice to use a sea shell for a salt dish. Rock salt can also be used, but table salt -though acceptable- should be regarded as a last resort.

Salt is always useful, as a little placed on the tongue after any magical or psychic work helps to ground the excess energy.

Place your water to the left of your altar. Salt may also be placed to the left of the altar as representative of Earth, but is often placed to the right to facilitate the mixing of salt and water. This is because in certain connotations the water and salt also represent Goddess and God respectively.

## OTHER ITEMS

In addition to these items, your Magical Tools will also have a place on your altar -you will learn about these in **LESSON V**. There are also several other items that people usually keep on their altars.

**LIBATION DISH** -a libation dish is used to make liquid offerings to Goddess, God, or Spirits. Often a cup of juice or wine is shared in ritual, and some will be offered to the Deities or Spirits either before or after the human participants have drunk. To make this offering, or **LIBATION**, a portion is placed in the libation dish and dedicated to Deities or Spirits. This is a gesture of respect and sharing -a means of giving back a portion of what you receive to its source. When the ritual is done the libation is normally disposed of by being returned to the elements, that is to say it is either emptied outside onto soil or into running water, or perhaps into a special Earth Pot. In this way its physical essence is returned to Mother Earth to nourish Her and be re-used for the sustenance of new life. However, some people consume the libation themselves after the ritual has ended, feeling that Spirit has taken the part of the offering it desired and that the rest is left for them. Which of these alternatives is preferable is largely a matter of opinion.

**OFFERING DISH** -in this same vein a dish for food offerings may be used. An **OFFERING** such as flour, corn or commeal, rice, a cookie or small piece of fruit, etc... is placed in the offering dish and dedicated to Deities or Spirits. As such offerings are symbolic in nature, only a small quantity need be used. This is a means of building a psychic bond and showing respect,

not giving sustenance. Like the libation, a food offering is commonly released to the elements, though it may be eaten by the celebrants in the knowledge that Spirit has taken of its essential nature, leaving the physical behind.

**BURNING DISH** -you may wish to have a burning dish on your altar, in which to burn paper in rituals that require this. Burning a paper on which we have written our desires is a common form of **SYMPATHETIC MAGIC** -as the paper burns it is believed that the desires are released into manifestation. Obviously a burning dish must be fire resistant, and big enough to accommodate a sheet of paper that has been folded once or twice.

**IMAGES** -Frequently the altar includes images of Goddess and God, or tokens representing them (for example an antler or acorns might betoken the God, a seashell or a Moon the Goddess). You might also want images of other spirits you call upon -photos of Ancestors or drawings of Spirit Guides. Perhaps a picture or a doll representing an aspect of yourself with which you commonly work, or which you wish to



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*Altar with images of Ancestors and offering bowl.  
(Artwork reprinted from Wheel of Hekate #3, Samhain '87)*

develop further -your Higher Self, for example, or **YOUNGER SELF**, or key past lives.

**EARTH POT** -this a bowl filled with earth or rocks to honor Mother Earth and the element of Earth. The earth or rocks you keep in it might come from your back yard, or your birth place, or some favorite spot -or it might be gathered from various travels, the homes of friends, etc... this lends a very special stabilizing energy to an altar. A similar effect can be achieved by a number of rocks placed loosely on the altar, especially rocks you've found.

**STONES** -You may want to keep crystals or gems on your altar to amplify and color the energy. You may select them, or let them "select you" -by finding them or selecting stones that "call" or resonate to you. A

common way to tell if a stone (or any item) is for you, is to run your hand over a number of items (as a selection of stones) keeping it about an inch above the items, and see which one or ones feels “different” from the others. The one that is different from the others is “calling” you, and is the right one to take. Later you will learn the meanings and uses of different stones, and this will help you to select them. But for now just take ones you like, or that like you.

**FOUND OBJECTS** -found objects are lucky in general and are always appropriate for your altar. They are symbolic messages from Spirit, and knowing their meanings is an ancient art. This can be an excellent way of receiving spirit messages, or **OMENS**, and you will learn more about it in **LESSON XII**. This doesn't mean just anything you find of course, but things you happen across in unusual ways or in unusual places, or that “speak to” you. Putting found items on the altar helps to strengthen your bond with the altar.

**SEASONAL ELEMENTS** -lastly, remember that you can make use of seasonal elements on your altar - leaves, flowers, acorns, pinecones, etc... These can do a lot to help you make the Shift in Consciousness that is needed for magic. They also add tremendously to the atmosphere of your altar, provide variety, and commemorate the sacred Wheel of the Year.

Always remember that your altar is personal to you. It is the visible symbol of your personal connection to Spirit. There are traditions and guidelines as to how to set it up, but ultimately it must be right for YOU, and

## COLOR CHART

**Black** -wisdom, guidance, protection.  
**Purple** -spirituality and psychism.  
**Blue** -communication.  
**Green** -healing, prosperity, fertility.  
**Yellow** -happiness, success.  
**Orange** -creativity.  
**Red** -strong emotion, passion. Red can be used to add extra energy to any working.  
**Pink** -romantic love, compassion.  
**White** -Innocence, manifestation, general purpose.

that alone determines its proper form.

## EXERCISES

With this lesson you will be beginning a new series of exercises. You will discontinue doing Exercises #1-6 on a daily basis, though we advise you to run through them once or twice a week.

The new series of exercises works with the so-called Major Chakras - the seven most important energy centers of the body. There are many things to learn about the Chakras, but we shall only give a brief description of them at this time. They are as follow:

**The Root Chakra** - The Root Chakra is located near the prostate in men and the paraurethral gland (the so-called Graffenberg Spot) in women. This is essentially the same location for each, but due to anatomical differences may be perceived as being different. This difference in perception is the reason why some Chakra manuals describe the Root Chakra as being located at “the base of the spine” and others locate it in the genitals -the former is more the perception of a male, the latter of a female. One can visualize the Root Chakra as being roughly centered in the lower hip region.

The Root Chakra has to do with the will to live, vitality, and joy in life. It also has to do with the feeling that one is “in the right place” and doing those things that one is meant to be doing in life. The color of the Root chakra is red, its ruler is Saturn.

**The 2nd Chakra** -The 2nd Chakra is located in the gonads; for women the ovaries, for men the testicles. This gives the 2nd Chakra a distinctly different location in the anatomy of the two sexes. As with the Root Chakra, this difference in location has caused confusion in many Chakra manuals.

The 2nd Chakra has to do with creativity, self expression, and independence. It also has to do with the ability to stand up for ones self. The color of the 2nd Chakra is orange and its ruler is Mars.

**The Solar Chakra** -The Solar Chakra, as you already know, is located near the navel. Center of the Solar Circuit, it provides great energy to the body. The Solar Chakra has to do also with issues of self esteem, confidence, and acceptance by others.

The color of the Solar Chakra is yellow, and its ruler is the Sun.

**The Heart Chakra** -Located near the heart the Heart Chakra has to do with issues of love, self acceptance, compassion, and balance. The Heart Chakra also has to do with our ability to understand things on an emotional level.

The color of the Heart Chakra is green, and its ruler is Venus.

**The Throat Chakra** -Located in the throat, the Throat Chakra has to do with mentality, will power, concentration, and communication. It has to do with our ability to understand concepts mentally, and communicate that understanding to others.

The color of the Throat Chakra is pale blue, and its ruler is Mercury.

**The Third Eye** -Located in the forehead the Third Eye has to do with ones ability to receive information psychically, and to access and use the psychic powers of the Higher Self. The Third Eye has to do with our ability to understand spiritual matters, and to interact on a spiritual level.

The color of the Third Eye is dark blue, and its ruler is the Moon.

**The Crown Chakra** -The Crown Chakra is located at the top of the head or just above it. The Crown Chakra has to do with our connection to Spirit and our oneness with Spirit.

The color of the Crown Chakra is violet, and its ruler is Jupiter.

These then are the seven Major Chakras and a brief description of their qualities. By exercising them you are working with every aspect of your being as well as preparing the ability to handle major amounts of energy.

These exercises are more complex than those which have come before, having more steps and more different subjects to visualize at once -but if you've been doing first 6 exercises one after the other as instructed, you have had good practice toward handling this level of complexity.

### EXERCISE #7

As always, begin by finding a comfortable position and releasing all tension and anxiety.

Begin by imagining a ball of red light in the Root Chakra, at the center of your lower pelvic region. The ball of light should be clear and bright. If the light is muddy or clouded, or if it is dull, take a moment and will it to become clear and bright.

When you have the image of the ball of red light at the Root Chakra clear in your mind, move to the 2nd Chakra. For women this will be the mid-abdominal region, for men it will be at or just above the testicles. Imagine a ball of orange light here, and again if the light is muddy or dull, take a moment and make it clear and bright.

As you make the ball of orange light in the 2nd Chakra, continue to hold the image of the red ball of light in the Root Chakra too. You may not be able to do this at first, but as you practice it will become easier. As you move to each successive Chakra, try to hold the image of the balls of light in the previous Chakras, so that at the end of the exercise you will be visualizing seven balls of light all at once.

Now move on to the Solar Chakra. Imagine a ball of clear yellow light in the Solar Chakra, in the center of your trunk, behind your navel. Again, make sure the light is as clear and bright as possible. Try to hold the image of the orange and red balls of light you have already opened in the previous Chakras as you create this ball of yellow light.

When the image of the ball of yellow light is clear in your Solar Chakra, move up to the Heart Chakra. Create a ball of clear green light in the Heart Chakra, at the center of your chest, behind your sternum. Make sure the light is clear and bright. Try to hold the image of the previous three balls of colored light as you do this.

Hold the image of this ball of green light and the

three which preceded it as you move on to the Throat Chakra. Imagine a ball of light blue light in the center of your throat. Make the light as clear and bright as possible.

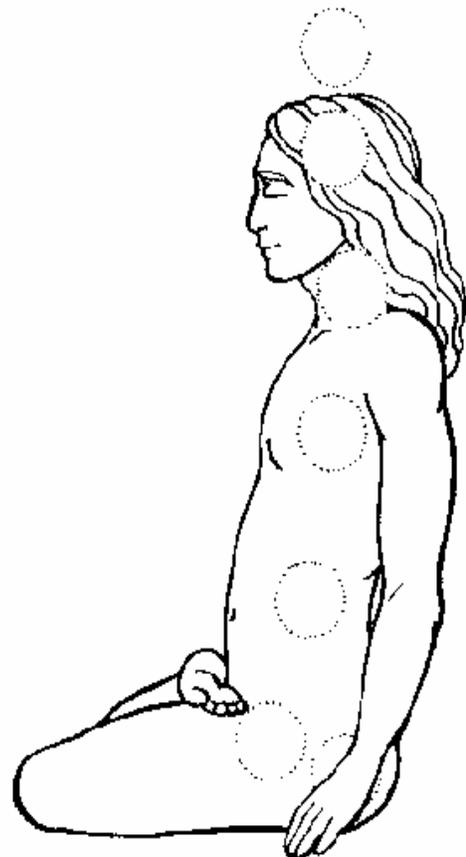
Now move on to the Third Eye. Behind the center of your forehead imagine a ball of deep blue light. Make that deep blue light as clear and bright as you can, forcing out any muddiness or occlusion. Try to hold the image of all of the balls of light you have already opened, as you create the ball of deep blue light at the Third Eye.

When the ball of deep blue light is clear in your mind, move on to the Crown Chakra. Just above the top of your head, imagine a ball of violet light, beautiful, clear, and bright. Try to hold the image of all seven balls of light at once. Hold this image for a few moments.

You have now "opened" each of the seven Major Chakras.

Now you are ready to go back down. It is extremely important to close the Chakras back down after you have finished working with them, and you must make sure you always do this. If you do not, you may find yourself extremely ungrounded. If that should happen, you only need to close the Chakra and clear and release the energy, but it is much better to avoid the problem in the first place.

Begin with the Crown Chakra. Imagine the ball of violet light you have made begin to shrink. See the ball of light grow smaller and smaller until it disappears.



Now imagine a tiny open door, and close it.

Now do the same with the ball of deep blue light you have created at the Third Eye. See it grow smaller and smaller until it disappears. Then see a small open door where the ball of light was, and close it.

Repeat this for each of the Chakras as you go down: Throat, Heart, Solar, 2nd, Base.

Now clear and release all excess energy as you know to do.

When you first try to do this exercise you may find it difficult to hold the image of all seven balls of light at once. Do your best. It doesn't matter if you can't do it at first -just go from one to the next. As you keep trying, you will find it easier.

By repeatedly opening, expanding, and closing the Chakras in this manner you are making them stronger, just as you would strengthen a physical muscle by exercising it. This will increase your psychic and magical abilities.



## SPELL OF THE MONTH

As discussed in the body of the lesson, this month's **Spell of the Month** is a space cleansing spell.

Space cleansing is very important. Residue accumulates from the energy of people and events which have been in a given space. This is rather like invisible scum that adheres to the area, changing the vibration of its energy for the worse. This is especially true of places where traumatic events have occurred, but even everyday events build up a residue as well. Therefore this kind of cleansing is very important.

Space "cleansing" can also be described as "purification" or "blessing" of the area. Any space can benefit from being cleansed, but it is especially important in places where people live -especially homes and bedrooms. Space cleansing is also very important for areas where you plan to do magical working or rituals, as energetic residue may tend to make it harder

to raise and direct energy.

The simplest form of space cleansing requires no "tools" or "props", only your own ability to visualize. In order for it to work fully, you must concentrate strongly. You may wish to ask your Spirit Guides to help you -you do not need to know WHO they are to ask their aid, only THAT they are.

Begin by clearing and releasing all excess energy from yourself, as you have learned to do.

Enter the space you plan to cleanse, or at least stand on its periphery.

Set your INTENT and speak it with words like these:

*"Behold, I do cleanse and purify this space, nothing which is negative or harmful may remain here! I cast out all negativity, returning it to Mother Earth, that She may reuse and recycle it to better purposes."*

Now visualize a clear white or yellow light entering the room and filling it. See the room fill with the white or yellow energy until it is full, and visualize it pushing out the negativity (which you might see as bits of darkness, kind of like psychic dust). As you do this, concentrate strongly on the idea of eliminating all negativity from the place.

Now say something like:

*"I do bless this space, and will that nothing which is negative or harmful may return here!"*

Visualize the room filling now with a pure blue-white light, going into every part of the space, and concentrate on the idea that this light will form a barrier against all negativity.

When the space is filled of blue-white light, visualize that light changing to a vivid purple in color. This raises the vibration of the energy greatly, making it impossible for negativity to remain.

Now set a seal on it by speaking words of power like:

*"By my will, with harm to none, as do will so mote it be!"*

Now clear and release all excess energy from yourself.

This is the simplest form of space cleansing.

If you wish, you may augment it with certain tools: incense for example, or Holy Water.

To use incense, choose the form of incense you prefer: cone, stick, smudge stick, powdered, or non-combustible. Then acquire an appropriate kind of incense in that form. Incenses that are especially good for cleansing include Sage, Lavender, and Frankincense, among others.

After you fill the space with yellow white light, take the incense and go through every part of the area, filling it with the smoke, while continuing to concentrate on clearing out all negativity. Then proceed as above.

If you prefer a non-combustible incense, your best bet at this point in your studies would be a sprig of FRESH Sage, which would be waved through the area rather than burned.

Along with or instead of incense you could also use Holy Water. In Wiccan usage the term Holy Water refers to any of several forms of consecrated water. One form of Holy Water is charged by the light of the Full Moon, or of the Sun -this is also called Lustral Water. Lustral Water is fairly rare and is used for specific purposes. The more common form of Holy Water is consecrated water and salt, which is used in most in most rituals.

To consecrate Holy Water you will need; water, and salt (preferably sea salt, as discussed above, in the body of the lesson).

Clear and release all excess energy.

Place your hand over the water. Make three Tuathail or counterclockwise circles over the water, concentrating on removing any negativity from it. Say something to the effect of:

*"Behold, I exorcise you, O creature of Water, casting out from you any impurities which may lie within!"*

Imagine yellow-white light pouring down from your hand into the water, and forcing out all negativity.

Now make three Deosil or clockwise circles with your hand over the water. Say something like:

*"And I do bless and consecrate you to this work!"*

Visualize the water being filled with a clear, bluish white light. Imagine the water filling with this light until it shines as brightly as if there were a blue-white sun within it.

Now repeat this process in the same way for the salt. As water is (obviously enough) the "creature of Water" so salt is the "creature of Earth."

When the salt is blessed, say:

*"Behold, the salt is pure! Behold the water is pure! Purity into Purity then, and purity be blessed!"*

Add three pinches of salt to the water and stir.

You have now made the simpler form of Holy Water.

## GOD OF THE MONTH



*The Irish Mother Goddess Boann.  
(Artwork reprinted from The Round Table, '95)*

## THE MOTHER

The pre-eminent expression of the Triple Goddess is as the Great Mother.

Though the three aspects of the Goddess - Maiden, Mother, and Crone- are all equally important and form an eternal cycle of creation and recreation, nonetheless it is Her aspect as Mother that is most commonly invoked.

In Her simplest form, the Great Mother represents Deity as Mother of Creation, eternally loving, eternally nurturing. The Mother created the Universe from Herself and sustains it with Her Divine love and providence.

In this sense the Mother is a Goddess of unconditional love, compassion, and nurturing. She is the Goddess of the deep fertility and creativity necessary to create and sustain life, and has endless reserves of strength and will.

As well as the Creator of the Universe, the Mother is also the ruler of the Universe -but She governs the Universe as a mother governs Her children: with love and a desire for their growth and security.

In a more abstract sense the Mother Goddess

is "Spirit." In the Vangelo Delle Streghe we are told that the Primordial Goddess divided Herself between the God (material world) and Goddess (spiritual world) energies. The Mother is that Spiritual essence which infuses all things, and without which our world would be nothing but lifeless matter. When we speak of the Mother Goddess in this sense the concept of Her nurturing and sustaining the Universe takes on a fuller meaning.

The Mother Goddess produces all life from Herself -all things are Her children. She loves all of creation deeply and equally, and Her only motivation is love. All things which exist are produced by Her love and sustained by it -and though it may not seem so in the moment, all things ultimately move in accordance with Her love.

The Mother Goddess is symbolized by the Full Moon, representing Spirit at the Height of its powers. She rules over the season of summer and the direction of the south. She rules the night as opposed to the day (the God), but from another viewpoint She is the day that follows the Maiden's dawn and precedes the Crone's dusk.

As the source of all life, the Mother is likened to the Earth in some places, the sea in others. This is because each is viewed as a source of bounty and sustenance by different peoples. Sometimes too She is likened to the stars of the heavens.

The Earth is often spoken of as Her body, but in a wider sense the whole of the Universe is Her body.

Every creature of the Earth, from amoebas to elephants to people, is a part of the complex and interdependent eco-structure of the Earth. Though they appear independent, they are no more separate than the cells that make up your body -though each is a system unto itself. Similarly, the Earth itself is an interdependent part of the Universe, which can no more be separated from the Universe than your cells can be separated from you. The Universe and everything in it - All That Is- is the body of the Mother Goddess.

Thus when we invoke the Mother Goddess we can invoke Her in a personal sense as the loving Divine Parent, or in a cosmological sense as the spirit of All Things.

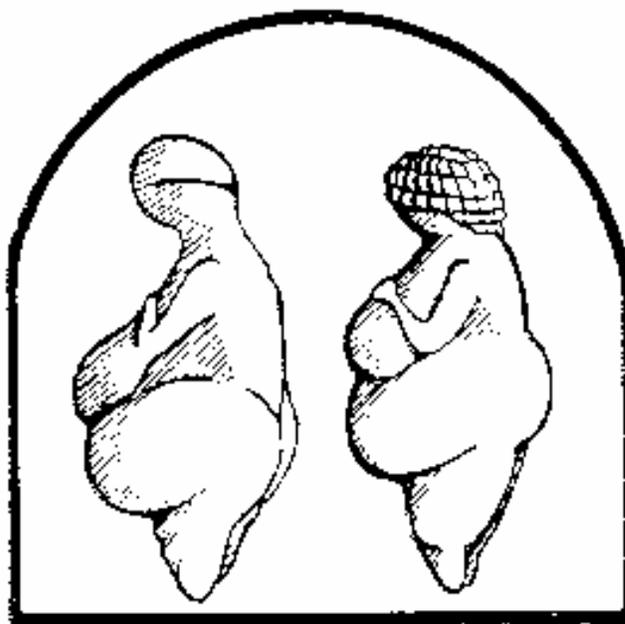
Below follow several examples of the Goddess as Mother:

**DEMETER** -Greek Goddess of the Earth and of growing things, Demeter created agriculture as a gift to humankind. The name "De Meter" means simply "the Mother." When Her daughter Kore was kidnapped by the King of the Dead and became Persephone, Queen of the Otherworld, Demeter fell into mourning, and winter came to the Earth. The plants that people and animals lived upon withered and died and there was great suffering upon Earth. At length Demeter found Her daughter, and it was agreed that Persephone should spend part of the year with Her Mother, and part

of the year as Queen of the Otherworld. Each year when Persephone was in the Otherworld winter would return to the earth -but so that people would not suffer from starvation, Demeter created grain, and gave the secret of it's cultivation to Triptolemus, Prince of Eleusis, who then taught it to the world. The name Demeter is said to mean "The Mother." In early times Demeter was sometimes depicted as being a horse, or as being horse-headed, linking Her to Celti Mother Goddesses like Danu, Epona, and Rhiannon. The principle center of Demeter's worship was at Eleusis, near Athens, where the great Eleusinian Mysteries were held in Her honor each year.

**GAIA** -Gaia or Ge is the Greek Goddess of the Earth. In Greek myth Gaia was the Primeval Mother. Gaia's first child was Uranos, the Sky God, Who had no father. Thereafter Gaia took Uranos as Her consort. Gaia became the mother of the Titans, the Elder Gods of Greek mythology, and of all living creatures. In time Gaia and Uranos, Earth and Sky, were separated by Their son the Titan Chronos (Time) Who castrated His father and gave the world it's current form. In modern belief Gaia is the *Nouos*, or "World Soul" -the soul and consciousness both of the Earth (as She is most commonly perceived), and in a larger sense of the Universe, which is a single, integrated living Being having both a Spiritual (Goddess) and Physical (God) aspect.

**LAKSMI** -Laksmi is one of the most popular Hindu manifestations of the Great Mother Goddess. Symbolized by the "sacred cow", Laksmi is viewed as



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"Venus" figurines, representing the Great Mother -Gaia.

To the right is the Austrian "Venus of Willendorf."

To the left is the Siberian "Venus of Gagarino."

The Willendorf is dated at 30,000 years old.

(Artwork reprinted from *The Round Table*, '97)

the source of material sustenance, wealth, and good fortune, and as the origin of all material blessings. Laksmi is said to have arisen from a primordial sea of milk while mounted upon a lotus -a legend which links Her with Padme, a creator Goddess also symbolized by the lotus. Laksmi's consort is Visnu the preserver, and They figure together in many myths. The most famous Avatars, or incarnations, of Laksmi and Visnu are Sita and Rama, and Radha and Krisna.

**MATI SUIRA ZEMLYA** -Mati Suira Zemlya means "Mother Moist Earth." She is the Mother Goddess of



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**MATI SUIRA ZEMLYA**

*(Artwork reprinted from Wheel of Hekate #4, Spring '89)*

ancient Russia, and represents the fertility of the Earth itself. Mati Suira Zemlya's consort is Svarog, the Sky God, and together They became the parents of the Gods and of all living things. Spirit of the Earth, Mati Suira Zemlya is greatly revered. She is held to be the origin of all stability, strength, and good things. When Russians speak of the "Mother Country" or "Mother Russia" it is ultimately to Mati Suira Zemlya that they are referring, though they may or may not always be conscious of the fact.

**YEMAYA** -Also called Iemonja, Yemaya is the Afro-diasporic Mother Goddess. Goddess of the life-giving

sea, Yemaya represents the bounty of the ocean, and the waters which give fertility to the Earth and sustenance to living creatures. A Goddess of compassion, strength, and nurturing, Yemaya is the special Patron of mothers and children, and of the family.

## **GLOSSARY**

**SPIRIT GUIDES** -Every person has a number of Spirit Guides, or Familiar Spirits, around them. These spirits are there to help us in our lives, especially in dealing with major life lessons. They are also there to advise us, if we know how to listen to them. Spirit Guides are drawn from among the spirits of people we have known, with whom we still have a strong connection. Sometimes these are people we have known in this life, and sometimes they are people we have known in other lifetimes of which we may or may not have conscious memory. A person may have many Spirit Guides, but usually one special spirit will be the main guide. This spirit is a companion and guardian throughout life, even if the person has no conscious knowledge of their presence. There are many different kinds of Spirit Guide, some of whom specialize in healing, or the development of particular qualities or talents. But it is not necessary to know what a Spirit Guide specializes in to receive their help -indeed, it is not even necessary to know they are there to be helped by them. In medieval times Spirit Guides were called Fairies, before that term came to be attached to Nature Spirits instead. They are also sometimes called "guardian angels." But whatever they are called, the concept is always the same -a spiritual guide and helper who eases our journey through life.

**GEOMANCY** -Geomancy is the art of reading the Earth's energy and aligning ourselves and our works to take best advantage of it. By aligning to the natural orientation and flow of energy in this manner, we add to the effectiveness of our workings. Geomancy is a very ancient art and has a number of local variations which are still in use. On one level Geomancy deals with the Earth's vortices and ley lines, delineating the energetic character of differing physical locations, and the nature of their connection to each other. More commonly however the term Geomancy refers to interpretation by direction. Geomancy has many uses, including the selection of auspicious locations for structures or events, determining the proper directional alignment of buildings or objects, etc...

**FENG SHUI** -Ancient Chinese art of Geomancy based on the directions and the Asian system of five Elements. Feng Shui is used to align the position of buildings, to decorate rooms and in general to divine the most auspicious place to put things, to allow for a free flow of

Chi (spiritual energy).

**DEOSIL** -This term is used to indicate clockwise movement. It literally means "Southwards" from the Gaelic *Deas*, or "South". Deosil movement represents the movement of spiritual energy into physical manifestation.

**TUATHAIL** -This term is used to indicate counter-clockwise movement. It literally means "Northward" from the Gaelic *Tuath* or "North". The term is commonly replaced with the colloquial "Widdershins" -a Gardnerianism.

**ALTAR TABLE** -the surface on which an altar is set up, an altar table can be most anything from a patch of ground to a marble pedestal -and anything in between. It is generally considered preferable that an altar table be made of wood or stone (or such materials as plaster or terra cotta, for that matter). Metal is usually not used because of the conductivity of its nature, though altar pieces are often of metal, and it is not unusual for an altar table to be decorated with metal ornaments or inlay, or to have a metal frame.

**ALTAR CLOTH** -A cloth placed upon an altar table to enrich or decorate it. Altar cloths originated in a time when all cloth was woven by hand, and embroidered cloth was a status symbol and its use a sign of an important occasion. Altar cloths are often very beautiful, and sometimes include a wall hanging behind the altar as well.

**ELEMENTS** -Elements are thought of as the basic building blocks of creation. Different cultures have used different substances to symbolize the elements, and sometimes different numbers of them, and their correspondences vary widely according to location. In the Wiccan religion they are normally said to be: Air, Fire, Water, and Earth. All things are said to be made up of these elements in differing proportions. It must be understood that it is not the physical substance that is meant here, but rather the spiritual qualities that they represent. Air represents inspiration, Fire action, Water reaction, and Earth integration. In addition Spirit is said to be the fifth element, of which all the others are manifestations.

**MAGICAL TOOLS** -In the wider sense magical Tools are any items which are dedicated to use in magic. They are usually highly personal and important to the user. In a more narrow sense a Wiccan's magical tools are four; the Arthame or magical blade, the Wand, the Chalice, and the Pentacle. These are the same tools around which the Tarot is based, and have roots in very ancient practice.

**CANDLE MAGIC** -Candle magic is the art of using a candle to focus your energy and intent to bring about a

desired result. Usually the candle is lit and focused on for a period of meditation. The candle may then be allowed to burn on, until it is consumed -in the belief that its burning is bringing the desired result into manifestation. Or the candle may be extinguished, and the ritual repeated at intervals, as every day for a set number of days. In addition there are many other ways to use candles in the practice of magic. Always remember that magic is a tool of self improvement and transformation, and should be used with care and for the good of all.

**INTENT** -We do magic by consciously focusing energy. We shape that energy through thought and emotion. The energy takes its direction from the "*intent*" we set into that thought and emotion. "*Intent*" is your goal or purpose -what you wish to achieve. And it is very important to be clear in *intent*. When you concentrate upon your *intent* during a magical working, you are imprinting the energy with your *intent*, so that it will shape itself to bring your *intent* to pass.

**ANCESTORS** -Ancestors are spirits of people who have helped to shape us into who we are. Commonly these are deceased family members, and it is in this way that the term is primarily used. But Ancestors need not necessarily be people to whom we are related by blood. A deceased person who helped us in some important way or whom we particularly admire may also be considered an Ancestor. Sometimes a historical personage to whom we are drawn (perhaps because of a past life connection of which we may or may not be conscious) will be considered an Ancestor. Ancestors are the spirits we honor as being fundamental to the development of our character, and to whom we have a strong psychic bond. Often they will act as Spirit Guides to us, advising and aiding us as we go through life. Ancestors should be acknowledged and honored regularly, to strengthen the bond between us and them.

**INCENSE** -Incense is an aromatic substance used to scent the air. Incense has many forms, both combustible and non-combustible, but people generally use the term to refer to any of several varieties of combustible incense which are commonly available. These include incense cones, incense sticks, and smudge sticks -all of which are directly lit with



an open flame as from a match or lighter- as well as powdered incense which is burned over a hot charcoal rather than being directly lit itself. The use of incense is very ancient, and in its earliest form it was probably thrown directly on the fire, or used to fuel the fire. Incense is used to raise the vibration of a place and to lend its own qualities to the energies being raised there. Some of the many different incenses which are commonly used include: Sage (cleansing and purification), Cinnamon (protection and prosperity), Rose (love), and Sandalwood (psychic opening).

**THURIBLE** -A thurible is an incense holder suspended from a chain, which can be hung, or swung to disseminate the smoke through a given area. They are sometimes extremely richly decorated, and are considered the most formal type of incense burner. They are normally used with powdered incense and charcoal, but other methods do exist. The use of the Thurible is very ancient, and magnificent historical examples exist.

**LIBATION** -A libation is a drink offering made to a Deity or Spirit. The most universal example is the pouring of a small amount of liquid directly on the Earth. Another famous example is the breaking of a champagne bottle on the bow of a ship for "her" Maiden voyage -this is an offering to the spirit of the ship, personified as female, in hopes of safe and successful future voyages. Libations were one of the most popular forms of offering in the ancient world, and there use s richly attested in classical literature. Libations are made as a sign of respect to the spirit, and out of a desire to share and give back to source, rather than as an offering of sustenance to the spirit.

**OFFERING** -An offering is a gift dedicated to a Deity, or Spirit. Many different terms exist to quantify the type of offering meant -a votive offering for example, given in fulfillment of a vow. The practice of making offerings is very ancient, and must be understood to be symbolic in nature, an act of respect and honor which strengthens the bond between the Deity or Spirit and the offerer, rather than as giving sustenance to the spirit.

**SYMPATHETIC MAGIC** -Sympathetic magic is based on the idea of "Sympathy" -that items which have similar qualities can be used to represent each other, and can be used to magically effect each other. Thus because growing plants are green, green is the color of growth and increase -therefor burn a green candle to bring prosperity. Because fire brings transformation -changing raw food to cooked, wood and other materials to ash -burning a magical charm on a piece of paper can bring transformation to a situation. In reality these are "keys" or symbolic tools that we use to focus our energy and intent, which is what really makes the change.

**YOUNGER SELF** -"Younger Self" is a term which is used to describe the part of the self which is creative,

spontaneous, and non-judgmental. Commonly this part of the self is visualized as a child version of the adult. Younger Self is sometimes described as being the place of Innocence, from which all things are possible. Many people have cut themselves off from this aspect of their persona, and neglected it -sometimes as a result of trauma. Such people must make an effort to reconnect with their Younger Self, and give it love and nurturing, until it is fully active within them. There are many techniques for doing this, most of which involve symbolically externalizing Younger Self to show it love. But even if we have not cut ourselves off from Younger Self, we should still make a strong effort to stay connected to it, and to keep it healthy and active.

**OMENS** -Omens are messages from Spirit delivered in symbolic terms. Omens have been believed in all around the world in every time and place. They are symbolic and are personal rather than universal in nature. That is to say that an individual or a culture creates a language of symbols which Spirit then uses to communicate with them, so that different symbols will be used in different places. An example of an omen is the famous black cat crossing in front of one, warning of a need to seek and heed inner guidance. Omens are based on the idea that there is no such thing as a "chance" happening, and that everything that happens reflects the will of Spirit.

## **Exam for Lesson IV**

You may take the exam online at WitchSchool.  
<http://www.witchschool.com>