

THE ALEX SANDERS LECTURES

PART ELEVEN:

THE LEGEND OF THE GODDESS

by ALEX SANDERS



The legends enacted in the Wicca mysteries resemble those in the Eleusian myth of the descent of Kore (Persephone) into the Underworld where she meets the dreaded Lord of the Shadows (Pluto). These particular variations of the legends are to be found almost verbatim in the Babylonian and earlier Sumerian tablets.

Aradia, in her quest for knowledge, wished to pass by the gates of the Lord of Death. After having travelled for many miles she at last found the entrance to the Netherlands and the Guardians that were set upon the seven gates removed her jewels and garments, saying: 'Naught may ye bring with ye into this our land.' Naked and bound she was brought before the Lord of the Shadows, who was Lucifer, his light shrouded in the darkness. He recognised her and desiring her for his Queen would have laid down his might and dominion for her yet she would not have him, she, the most beautiful of all created things saw only ugliness in his dark face. Thus it was that she was taken and made to kneel to Death's scourge. This scene may be seen depicted in the paintings of the villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii. The pain of this chastisement opened her eyes to the truth and she knew the hidden wisdom, she perceived the veil that covered the radiance of Lucifer, and seeing him to be that which she sought they made love and were one.

Ritualistic treatment of this legend starts with the entrancing repetition of challenge, question, answer and caution as she goes through the seven gates and builds up to the expressive catharsis and fulfillment at the end.

After the vision of true knowledge the creation legend is told in full:

Diana was the first created before all creation. In her were all things, out of her first darkness she divided herself into darkness and light. Lucifer her brother and son, was the light and when Diana saw that the light was so beautiful, the light that was her other self, her brother Lucifer, she yearned for it with exceeding great desire, wishing to receive the light again into her darkness, to swallow it up in rapture, in delight. She trembled with desire. This desire was the dawn, but Lucifer the Light fled from her and would not yield to her wishes. He was the light which flies into the most distant parts of Heaven, the mouse which flies before the cat. Thus Diana went to the fathers of the beginning, to the mothers, the spirits which were before the first spirit and lamented unto them that she could not prevail with Lucifer and they praised her for her courage. They told her that to rise she must fall, to become the giant of Goddesses she must become mortal and in the ages, in the course of time, when the world was made, Diana went on Earth, as had Lucifer, who had fallen even into the underworld, and Diana practised magic and sorcery, whence are witches and fairies and goblins, all that is like man, yet not mortal. And thus it came that Diana took the form of a cat.

Her brother had a cat whom he loved above all other creatures, a fairy a fairy but he did not know. Diana prevailed with the cat and changed form with him. with him As she lay on her brother's bed she assumed her own form and so by Lucifer became the mother of herself upon the Earth. But when in the morning he found that that he lay by his sister and light had been conquered by darkness, Lucifer was was extremely angry. Diana sang him a spell, a song of power, and he was silent silent so Diana with her knowledge of witchcraft so charmed him that he yielded to to her love. This was the first fascination. She hummed and sang and it was as was as the humming of bees, the spinning wheel spinning life. She spun the lives lives of all men, all things were spun from the wheel of Diana and Lucifer turned turned the wheel.

It came to pass that Diana assumed the form of a double, Aradia, who she who she met upon the Earth. Aradia was not known to the witches, the fairies and and the elves and those that dwell in desert places, the Goblins as they are known. known.

She had such a passion for witchcraft and became so powerful that her greatness could not be hidden and thus it came to pass, once at the meeting of all the sorceresses and fairies, she declared that she would darken the heavens and turn all the mice into stars and those who were present said: 'If thou canst do such a strange thing, having risen to such power, thou shalt be our Queen.'

Aradia went into the street. She took the bladder of an ox, and a piece of witch money (with such money one can take the earth from men's tracks), she took the earth and with it and many mice she filled the bladder and blew it till it burst and there followed a great marvel. The Earth which was in the bladder became the white moon above, and for three days there was great rain. The mice became stars and the rain. Diana became queen of witches. She was the cat who relit the star mice, the men and the rain. Aradia told her followers:

'Listen to the words of the Great Mother, who was of old called many names; Astarte, Dione, Melusine, Aphrodite, Ceridwen, Dana, Arianrhod, Eride, Isis and by many other names. Whenever ye have need of anything, once in the month and better it be when the moon is full, then shall ye assemble in some secret place and adore the spirit of me who am Queen of all Witcheries. There shall ye assemble, ye who are fain to learn all sorcery. To these will I teach things yet unknown and as a sign that ye be truly free ye shall be naked in your rites and ye shall dance, sing, feast, make music and love, all in my praise for I bring the ecstasy of the spirit and mine also is joy on Earth for my law is love unto all beings. Mine is the secret gate which opens the door of youth and mine is the cup of the wine of life and the cauldron of all of the Goddesses that are for these are the Holy Grail of immortality. I am the gracious Goddess who gives joy unto the heart of man.

Upon Earth I give the knowledge of the spirit eternal and when I have conquered the Lord of life and death and what lies beyond then will I give peace and freedom and reunion with those who have gone before for I am the mother of all living and my love is poured out upon the Earth. Hear ye my words for I am the star goddess. She in the dust of whose feet are the host of heaven, whose body encircleth the universe.

I who am the beauty of the green Earth and the white moon amongst the stars and the mystery of the waters and the desire of the heart of man.

Arise and come unto me for I am the soul of Nature which giveth birth to the Universe. From me all things proceed and unto me all things must return and before my face for I am the beloved of gods and men. Thine inmost divine self shall be enfolded in the rapture of the infinite. Therefore let there be beauty and strength, power and compassion, honour and humility, mirth and reverence within you and thou who thinkest to seek for me, know thy seeking and yearning shall avail thee not unless thou know the mystery. That if that which thou seekest thou findest not within thee, thou wilt never find it without thee, for I have been with thee from the beginning and I am that which is attained at the end of desire.'

THE LEGEND OF THE GODDESS (2)

The legend is further enacted in the second and third degree initiation ceremonies of the Wicca. This particular legend is enacted inside the Magic Circle.

In Ancient times our Lord, the Horned One, was, as he still is, the consoler, the comforter. But men knew him as the dread Lord of Shadows, lonely, stern and just. But our Lady, who had never loved Lucifer, the Horned One, upon the Earth and beneath the Earth, would solve all mysteries even the mysteries of Death. So she journeyed to the Underworld.

The guardians of the portals challenged her,

"Strip off thy garments, lay aside thy jewels for naught may ye bring with ye into this our land."

So the great crown was taken from her brow, the bracelets from her wrists and her ankles, the pearl earrings, the necklace of stars around her neck, the sacred girdle from about her waist and the covering of her body was removed and she was bound as all living must be who seek to enter the realms of Death, the Mighty One, and she journeyed with the guards of the portals for a long time in a dark and sombre land. *in a dark and sombre land.*

The guardians of the portals showed her a great and ancient castle and took her through the portals. Seated upon his ebon throne was the terrifying three-faced God of Light and Death and Darkness and such was her beauty that Death stepped forward from his throne and knelt and laid his sword and crown at her feet and kissed her feet saying: "Blessed be thy feet that have brought thee in these ways. Abide with me, but let me place my cold hand on thy heart." And she replied: "I love thee not. Why doest thou cause all things that I love and take delight in to fade and die?"

"Lady," replied Death, "tis age and fate, against which I am helpless. Age causes all things to wither, but when men die at the end of time I give them rest and peace and strength, so that they may return. But you - you are lovely. Return not, abide with me."

But she answered: "I love thee not."

"Then," said Death, "if you will not receive my hand upon thy heart you must kneel to Deaths scourge."

"It is Fate, better so," she said and she knelt. And Death scourged her tenderly and she cried, "I know the pangs of love," and Death raised her and said "Blessed Be" and he gave her the five-fold kiss saying: "Thus only may you attain to joy and knowledge."

And he taught her all the mysteries and returned to her the necklace of stars which is the circle of rebirth and in the heavens is the seat of the Goddess and she taught him her mystery of the sacred cup which is the Holy Grail of Immortality and the cauldron of rebirth and the cauldron of inspiration and the thirteen pearls on the rim of the cauldron are the tears of the love of the Goddess for her hidden children of the Wicca.

They loved and were one, for there be three great mysteries in the life of man. Magic controls them all. For to fulfil love you must return again at the same time and the same place as the loved one and you must meet and know and remember and love them again, but to be reborn you must die and to be made ready for a new body, and to die you must be born and without love you may not be born. And our Goddess returned through the portals of the Underworld to teach love and mirth, and happiness, and guardeth and cherisheth her hidden children in this life. And in her conquest of Death she teacheth the way to have communion and even in this world she teacheth them the mysteries of the Magic Circle which is placed between the two worlds, the world of Gods and the world of men.



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