

BTB PRESENTS

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO

# WICCA

VOLUME I:

BASIC TOOLS AND PRINCIPLES

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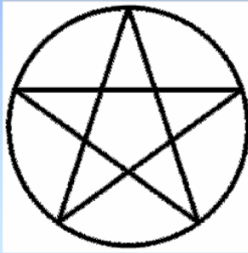
## An Overview with Pictures

Source: Joe Naumann, University of Missouri St. Louis



### Wicca

*Beliefs and Practices*



### Wiccan Deities

- Wicca can be considered to worship two major deities: the Triple Goddess and the Great Horned God
  - Some beliefs view these as male and female aspects of great deity.
  - Some beliefs are truly polytheistic, worshipping these deities equally with other selected deities from any number of pantheons.
- Many aspects of Wiccan deities tie into past emphasis on fertility, crops, protection, and survival in untamed environments



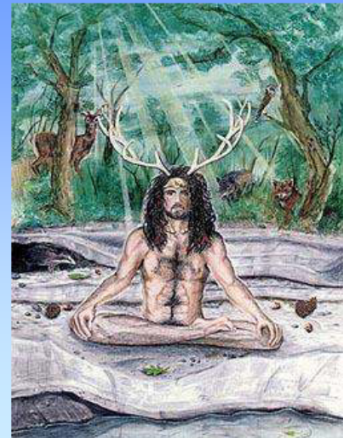
### Triple Goddess<sup>[2]</sup>

- Female – Wiccan
- Described as the Maiden, the Mother, the Crone.
  - Maiden: Youth, innocence, enchantment
  - Mother: Fertility, nurturing, power, stability
  - Crone: Wisdom and death.
- Very powerful, said to be all the other goddesses combined.
- More focused on growth and agriculturally based societies.



### Great Horned God<sup>[3]</sup>

- Male – Wiccan
- Counterpart to the Goddess
- Master of the hunt – Associated with hunting societies.
- Symbolic of the wild animals and unknown aspects of life.
- Grants bravery, strength, adventure, male virility.
- Primal and strong in nature.





## Wiccan Holidays<sup>[4]</sup>

- 8 Major Holidays (Sabbats)

- Yule (Winter Solstice)
- Imbolc (Brigids Day)
- Ostara (Spring Equinox)
- Beltane (Fertility. Crops)
- Litha (Summer Solstice)
- Lughnassad (Harvest)
- Mabon (Autumn Equinox)
- Samhain (Spirits and Winter)



- Represent changing of the seasons and agriculture



## Wiccan Magic

- Wiccan magic makes extensive use of the five elements: earth, wind, water, fire, spirit.
- General philosophy is that the magic can be effective through personal power, or through beseeching the aid of a powerful deity.
- Magic is often done through some form of ritual, ranging from informal to highly formal.
  - Informal rituals: simply repeating a phrase
  - Formal rituals: elaborate process involving a ritual space, tools, robes, and a strict set of words to speak.



## Wiccan Rituals

- Tools

- Athame (Wind)
- Cauldron (Water)
- Candle (Fire)
- Pentacle (Earth)

- Dress

- Skyclad or robes

- Purpose

- Holidays or a specific desire. (life changes)



## Wiccan Mores

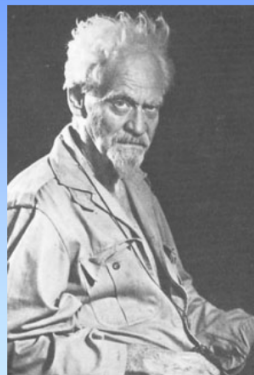
- “An it harm none, do what ye Will”
  - Common interpretation: Will = Higher Will
  - NOT an excuse to do whatever you want
- Law of three
  - Everything returns three times.
  - Golden rule.



## Wiccan History - Gardner

- Modern Wicca entered the public eye in 1954 when Gerald Gardner published a book titled High Magic's Aid

- Gardner claimed much of the information he gained from a Wiccan coven that he joined in 1939 and this coven descended from old Wicca.
- Wicca originally began with the Celtic culture.
- Isolated Wiccan covens have survived underground throughout time and have resurfaced in recent times.



## Wiccan History – Counterpoint

- Others believe there is no surviving tradition of old Wicca and that modern Wicca is a reconstruction.
- This community is largely composed of solitary practitioners



## *Alexandrian Wicca*

- Established in the 1960's by Alex Sanders
  - Found mostly in the U.S. and Canada
- Based on Gardner Wicca
- Included elements from Kaballah and Enochian Magic
- "If it works, use it"<sup>[8]</sup>
- Required initiation into a coven



## *Dianic Wicca*

- Based on the U.S. feminist movement in the 1960's.
- Founded by Zsuzsanna Emese Moukesay.
- Specifically focused on the feminine aspect and rejected the Great Horned God.
- Only women allowed in covens.
- No connection to Gardnerian Wicca.

## **A Brief History**

Source: History.com (2018)

Wicca is a modern-day, nature-based pagan religion. Though rituals and practices vary among people who identify as Wiccan, most observations include the festival celebrations of solstices and equinoxes, the honoring of a male god and a female goddess, and the incorporation of herbalism and other natural objects into rituals. Wiccans practice their religion according to an ethical code, and many believe in reincarnation.

## **WHAT IS WICCA?**

Wicca is considered a modern interpretation of pre-Christian traditions, though some involved claim a direct line to ancient practices. It may be practiced by individuals or members of groups (sometimes known as covens).

Wicca also has some commonalities with Druidism in its environmental component, and is considered the inspiration of the goddess movement in spirituality.

There is great diversity among individuals and groups that practice a Wiccan religion, but many are duotheistic, worshiping both a female goddess and a male god (sometimes referred to as a Mother Goddess and a Horned God).

Other Wiccan practices are atheist, pantheist, polytheist or respectful of gods and goddesses as archetypal symbols rather than as actual or supernatural beings. Rituals in Wicca often include holidays centered around phases of the moon; solar equinoxes and solstices; elements such as fire, water, earth and air; and initiation ceremonies.

## **MARGARET MURRAY**

The rituals of modern Wiccan practice can be traced to famed first-wave feminist, Egyptologist, anthropologist and folklorist Margaret Murray.

She wrote several books on medieval religion centered around witch cults in medieval Europe that inspired British seekers to create their own covens and structure worship around her descriptions, starting with 1921's *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*.

Later scholarship disputed Murray's claims about witch cults, but her influence could not be erased within Wicca.

## **GERALD GARDNER**

Wicca was first given a name in Gerald Gardner's 1954 book *Witchcraft Today*, in which he announced it as "wica," the extra "c" being added in the 1960s. According to Gardner, the word was derived from Scots-English and meant "wise people."

Gardner, considered the founder of Wicca, was born in 1884, north of Liverpool in England. A world traveler with an interest in the occult, Gardner first heard the word "Wica" used in the 1930s when he became involved with a coven in Highcliffe, England. He was initiated into the group in 1939.

In 1946 Gardner bought land in the village of Brickett Wood to establish a center for folkloric study, that would serve as headquarters for a coven of his own.

Gardner died of a heart attack in 1964 while onboard a ship off the North African coast. He was buried in Tunis. Only the ship's captain attended. In 1973, his extensive personal collection of artifacts was sold to *Ripley's Believe It Or Not*.

## **ALEISTER CROWLEY**

Gardner met famed occultist Aleister Crowley in 1947. When Gardner formally wrote out his Wiccan rituals, he drew strongly from Crowley's own, dating back to 1912.

The two men had similar ideas. Crowley had, in 1914, proposed the idea of forming a new religion that would pull from old pagan traditions worshipping the earth, celebrating equinoxes and solstices and other hallmarks of nature-based worship.

## **BOOK OF SHADOWS**

Gardner's fantasy novel *High Magic's Aid*, published in 1949, is considered one of the first standards of Wicca, but his *Book of Shadows*, a collection of spells and rituals, is central to Wiccan practice.

Written in the 1940s and 1950s, initiates were required to make their own copy by hand. The origin of the title is unknown, but some believe he borrowed it from the work of Scottish children's author Helen Douglas Adams.

## **DOREEN VALIENTE**

Future Wiccan leader Doreen Valiente met Gardner in 1952 when she contacted him following an article in *Illustrated* magazine that presented to their readers the reality of covens and their practices in a context of normal, educated people.

Under Gardner's direction, Valiente would revise the *Book of Shadows* for more popular consumption, exorcising Crowley's influence. In 1957, Valiente split from Gardner's coven with other members and rivals to Gardner sprang up, each with a coven of their own. Valiente would become a prominent Wiccan advocate and scholar.

## **RAYMOND BUCKLAND**

In 1963, Gardner initiated British expatriate and Long Island resident Raymond Buckland, who founded the Gardnerian Brentwood Coven, considered the first Wiccan coven in the United States.

Buckland became a vigorous promoter of Wicca in the United States and in the 1970s, moved to New Hampshire and developed Seax-Wica, which invoked Anglo-Saxon mythology into Wiccan practice.

## **SYBIL LEEK**

Sybil Leek was a popularizer of Wicca in America. Claiming to be a hereditary witch, Leek became involved with the New Forest coven in the late 1940s, continuing her practice through several covens in England before moving to the United States and settling in Los Angeles.

Leek transformed her Wiccan practice into celebrity status centered around astrology, writing numerous books and a regular column in *Ladies Home Journal*.

## **ALEX SANDERS**

Alex Sanders founded a strain known as Alexandrian Wicca in the 1960s.

Known as a publicity seeker, he catapulted to fame following an autobiography and a film in 1970, *Legend of the Witches*. Called “the King of the Witches,” Sanders typically pushed myths about his own lineage, claiming royal ancestry and alleging that his grandmother was not only a Wiccan, but had learned a strain of witchcraft that supposedly originated in Atlantis, and involved King Arthur and Merlin.

Sanders attracted a younger generation of followers, and the lurid stories about him are considered to have had the effect of popularizing Wicca as an alternate lifestyle in the 1970s.

## **LAURIE CABOT**

Laurie Cabot, “the Witch of Salem,” began to gain attention in the United States in the late 1960s teaching classes at Salem State College and helping police solve cases.

Her occult store in Salem is one of the first in America, and she established the popular Witches’ Ball. Governor Michael Dukakis declared her the “Official Witch of Salem” in 1977 and in 1986 founded the Witches League of Public Awareness.

## **WICCA AND FEMINISM**

The 1970s saw the American version of Wicca transform from the magic-based pagan discipline claiming British heritage to a nature-based spiritual movement, with heavy tones of environmentalism and feminism. In turn, this influenced the religion in England.

The feminist influence in Wicca strengthened in the 1970s and 1980s, brought about by women who had entered the religion attracted by the female deity, but were faced with a misogynist reality in the religion’s ranks.

In 1971 Wiccan activist Z. Budapest started the Susan B. Anthony coven, which practiced Dianic Wicca, a form of matriarchal lunar worship. Budapest wrote the *Feminist Book of Shadows*. A number of feminist covens were outgrowths from Budapest’s coven.

## **WICCA AND THE LAW**



In 1986, Wicca was recognized as an official religion in the United States through the court case *Dettmer v. Landon*.

In the case, incarcerated Wiccan Herbert Daniel Dettmer was refused ritual objects used for worship. The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Wicca was entitled to First Amendment protection like any other religion.

In 1998, a Wiccan student in Texas enlisted the aid of the ACLU after the school board tried to prevent her from wearing Wiccan jewelry and black clothes. The board reversed its view.

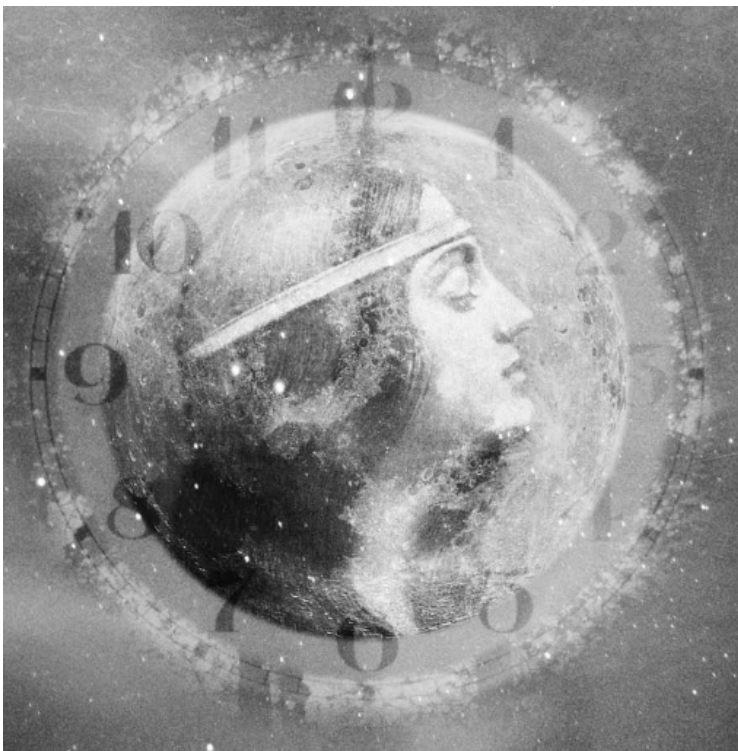
In 2004, the Indiana Civil Liberties Union fought to reverse a judge's decision that divorcing Wiccans were not allowed to teach their faith to their sons.

In 2005, U.S. Army Sgt. Patrick D. Stewart became the first Wiccan serving in the U.S. military to die in combat. His family was refused a Wiccan pentacle on his gravestone. As a result of a court case initiated by the Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, Wiccan symbols are now accepted by the Veterans Administration.

The number of practicing Wiccans in the United States has proven difficult to estimate, with sources reporting anywhere from 300,000 to three million practitioners.

## The Wiccan Rede

Wiccan High Priestess Dorothy Morrison



Wiccans live by the Wiccan Rede, a simple benevolent moral code that holds that as long as no one is harmed, 'do what thy wilt'. One popular version of the Rede, taught to her pupils by Dorothy Morrison, a leading American Wiccan and High Priestess of the Georgian Tradition, goes as follows:





*Bide the Wiccan Law you must,  
In perfect love and perfect trust.*

(Keep the laws of Wicca lovingly and with perfect trust.)

*Live and let live:  
Fairly take and fairly give.*

(Treat both nature and people as you would like to be treated.)

*Cast the circle thrice about,  
To keep the evil spirits out.*

(When making magic, Wiccans usually cast a circle around themselves. They do this three times because the number three stands for the three phases of The Lord and The Lady.)

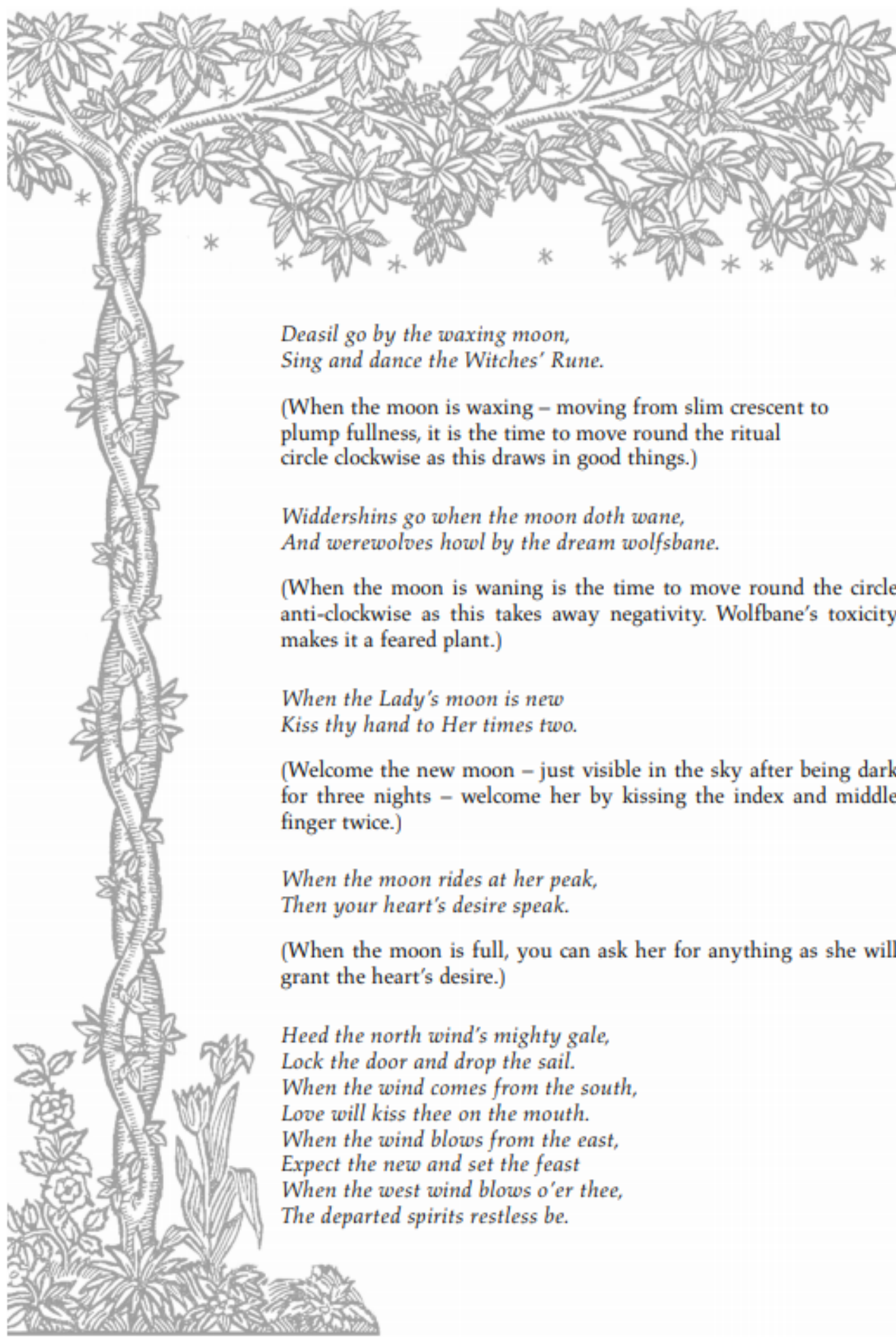
*To bind the spell every time,  
Let the spell be spake in rhyme.*

(By speaking their spells in rhyme, witches believe it gives the conscious mind something to think about, while the unconscious mind taps into the energy of nature and the magic is done.)

*Soft of eye and light of touch  
Speak little and listen much.*

(Wise magic makers are gentle. They listen and learn.)





*Deasil go by the waxing moon,  
Sing and dance the Witches' Rune.*

(When the moon is waxing – moving from slim crescent to plump fullness, it is the time to move round the ritual circle clockwise as this draws in good things.)

*Widdershins go when the moon doth wane,  
And werewolves howl by the dream wolfsbane.*

(When the moon is waning is the time to move round the circle anti-clockwise as this takes away negativity. Wolfsbane's toxicity makes it a feared plant.)

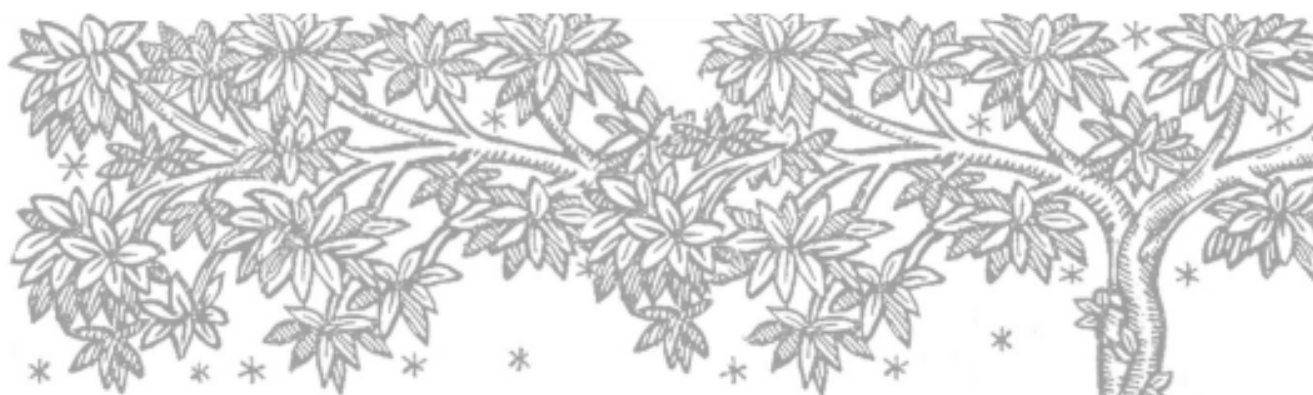
*When the Lady's moon is new  
Kiss thy hand to Her times two.*

(Welcome the new moon – just visible in the sky after being dark for three nights – welcome her by kissing the index and middle finger twice.)

*When the moon rides at her peak,  
Then your heart's desire speak.*

(When the moon is full, you can ask her for anything as she will grant the heart's desire.)

*Heed the north wind's mighty gale,  
Lock the door and drop the sail.  
When the wind comes from the south,  
Love will kiss thee on the mouth.  
When the wind blows from the east,  
Expect the new and set the feast  
When the west wind blows o'er thee,  
The departed spirits restless be.*



(These lines refer to the elements with the four directions.)

*Nine woods in the cauldron go,  
Burn them fast and burn them slow  
Elder the Lady's tree.  
Burn it not, or cursed be.*

(There are nine different magical woods burned in the witch's cauldron during various rituals – apple, birch, fir, hawthorn, oak, rowan, vine and willow. Elder wood is never burned because the tree is sacred to The Lady.)

*When the Wheel begins a turn,  
Let the Beltane fires burn  
When the Wheel hath turned to Yule,  
Light the log and let Pan rule.*

(This refers to the cycle of the year. Beltane, the spring sabbath and Yule the winter one, sit at opposite ends of the wheel of the year.)

*Heed ye flower, bush and tree,  
And by the Blessed Lady be!*

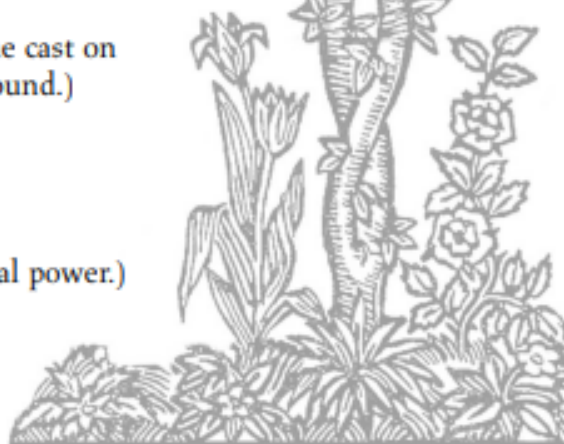
(For the Lady's sake, nurture and respect nature.)

*Where the rippling waters flow,  
Cast a stone and truth you'll know.*

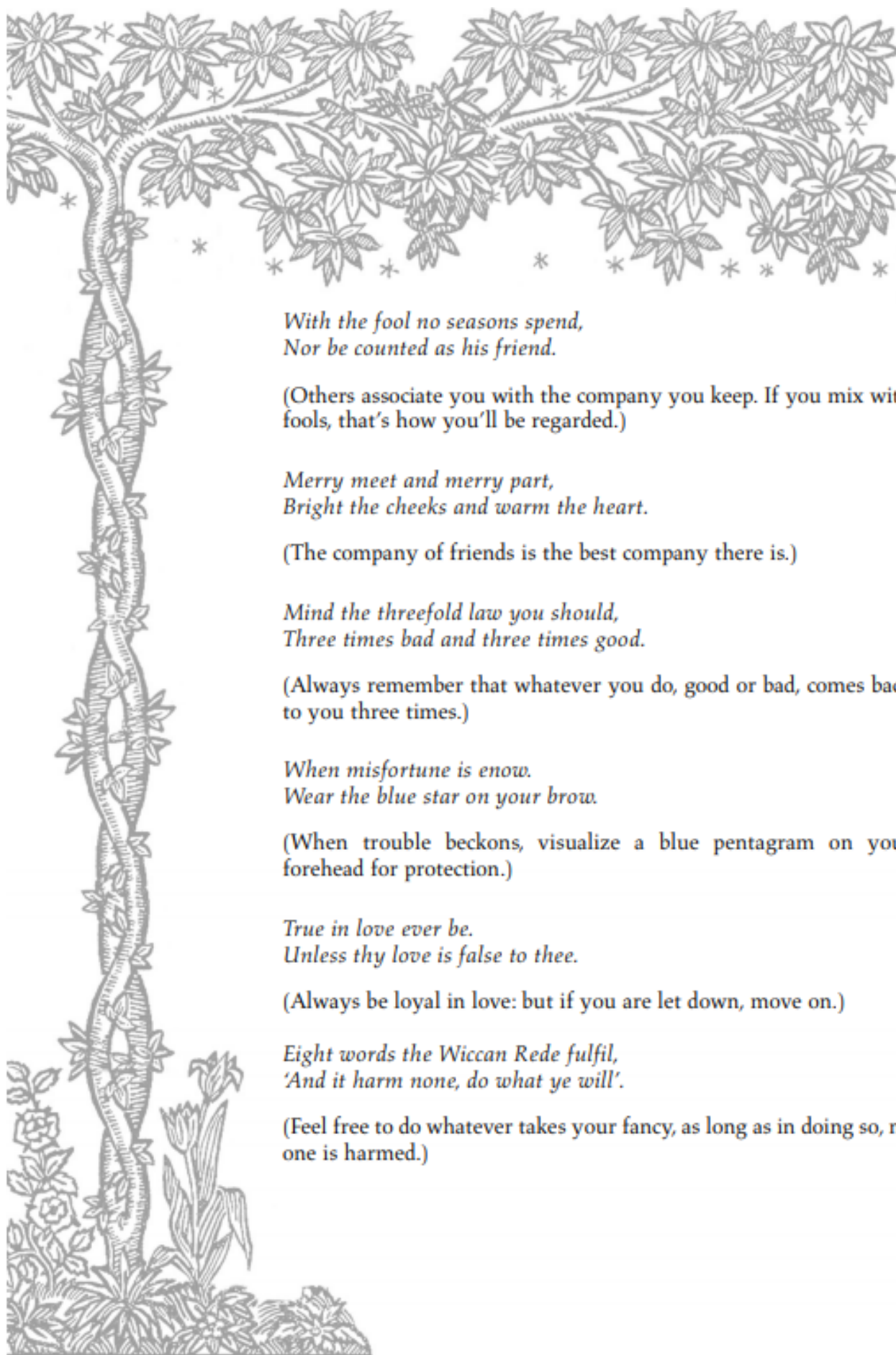
(Actions spread, like the ripples caused by a stone cast on the water, affecting everyone and everything around.)

*Whenever you do have a need,  
Harken not to others' greed.*

(Never take money in exchange for using magical power.)







*With the fool no seasons spend,  
Nor be counted as his friend.*

(Others associate you with the company you keep. If you mix with fools, that's how you'll be regarded.)

*Merry meet and merry part,  
Bright the cheeks and warm the heart.*

(The company of friends is the best company there is.)

*Mind the threefold law you should,  
Three times bad and three times good.*

(Always remember that whatever you do, good or bad, comes back to you three times.)

*When misfortune is enow,  
Wear the blue star on your brow.*

(When trouble beckons, visualize a blue pentagram on your forehead for protection.)

*True in love ever be,  
Unless thy love is false to thee.*

(Always be loyal in love: but if you are let down, move on.)

*Eight words the Wiccan Rede fulfil,  
'And it harm none, do what ye will'.*

(Feel free to do whatever takes your fancy, as long as in doing so, no one is harmed.)

## Basic Tools

Source: Michael Johnstone (2003)

There are certain things that spell makers, whether they are working in a group or on their own need. The following list covers most of them: but would-be weavers of magic who do not have them don't have to rush and get them all before starting to cast spells. You can improvise and as long as everything used has been properly consecrated, spells should not be any less effective.

An *altar* is simply a special area for magic. They may be ornately carved, beautifully crafted works of art; they may be any specially consecrated tabletop on which you work when preparing spells and on which you keep many of the tools that you use – a chalice, for example, candles or an athame.

Altars are central to Wiccan ritual and many non-Wiccanspell casters use them, too. The shape and location are irrelevant – they can be round or square, indoors or outdoors: all a spell caster has to do to create an altar is ritually cleanse and consecrate it in exactly the same way as the other tools. That done, the altar is created. Altars are usually candlelit and in Wiccan practice there are usually two special candles – one gold to represent the Lord and the sun, and a silver one standing for the Lady and the moon. Among the objects found on most altars are a bowl of salt and a bowl of water to represent these two elements, incense, an essential oil burner and many of the other things that are commonly used in making magic.

Many spell makers like to have a variety of different coloured altar cloths so that they can be varied in accordance with the phase of the moon, the sabbath being celebrated and the spell being cast. Others make do with just the one, which they decorate with suitably coloured crystals, flowers and the other appropriate objects.

*Amulets* are used to protect the spell caster from any evil influences that may be about. According to Pliny, the 1st-century Roman author, an amulet is 'an object that protects a person from trouble'. They can be man-made, such as a horseshoe or a piece of jewellery decorated with a precious stone or made from a metal that corresponds to the wearer's astrological sign, or naturally occurring, such as a rabbit's foot, a seashell or a stone, again with astrological correspondences to the wearer.

In Mesopotamia, animal-shaped amulets were popular with Babylonians and Sumerians, especially for fertility, protection and strength. Cylinder seals made from precious or semi-precious stones engraved with prayers and religious scenes have been found dating back to

2500 BC. Later ones that have been unearthed include figures of male and female deities, reptiles and curious winged creatures, half man, half lion.



*Ankh*



*Scarab*



*Eye of Horus*



*Star of David*

In Ancient Egypt, numerous animal-headed gods prowled the pantheon: their sacred names and images were commonly inscribed on amulets, worn for protection or painted on the walls of tombs to protect the dead in the afterlife. Amulets that were blessed by Egyptian magicians were held in the highest regard and were believed to be particularly potent.

The oldest Egyptian amulet is probably the ankh, which was normally fashioned out of wood, stone, metal or even wax. Symbolizing life, ankhs were sacred to all Egyptian deities. Known as 'the Key to the Nile' and to early Christians as an 'ansated cross', the ankh was believed to ensure the immortality of all the deities in the pantheon who were almost always depicted in Egyptian art as carrying it in their right hands. Composed of a cross (the male symbol) surmounted by an oval (symbolizing the female), the ankh represented the sacred union of God and Goddess whose marriage was said to take place every year at the source of the River Nile, just before the inundation that was so vital to Egyptian life.

Other Egyptian amulets include: the scarab, which represented resurrection and the eternal life and was worn as a protection against all forms of evil; the Eye of Horus (or the udjat), which was worn for protection and also to promote good health and well-being; and the lute-shaped nefer, which bestowed physical strength, joy and youth on those who wore it.

The Hebrews are known to have used a wide variety of amulets, the most famous of which is probably the Star of David, which actually predates the Jewish faith and was used as a magical symbol in Egypt, Babylon and Assyria. To Jews, the six-pointed star is symbolic of their faith; to others it offered protection from enemies, lethal weapons and fire. The letters of the Hebrew alphabet were regarded as amulets, for each of them was thought to contain its own magical powers. Other Hebrew amulets included bells to ward off evil spirits and the tzitzit, a sacred tassel worn on the robes of the High Priests.

*Natural amulets*, a gift from Mother Nature to those who believe in their power include trees, plants, flowers, herbs, vegetables, stones (mundane, semi-precious and precious) – indeed anything that the wearer believes to be ‘lucky’.

The *athame* is a double-edged ritual knife, about six inches long. It is usually blunt because the only thing it is used to cut is energy. In accordance with tradition, athames are black handled. Wiccans and other spell weavers use the athame to direct energy and to open and close the doorway to the spell caster's circle. If there is no athame, a sword, or awand, a branch cut very gently from a tree and suitably consecrated, can be used in its place. Some Wiccans use two fingers for this purpose.

*Baskets* are used for keeping together and for carrying into the circle many of the things needed in spell making.

*Bath* salts and oils are usually added to a ritual bath, taken before starting to weave spells, to put the spell caster in a suitably relaxed frame of mind.

A *bell* is often rung at the beginning of a ritual when calling the four quarters and at the end to tell the elements to return to their realms, after they have been thanked for their attendance at the ritual.

The *bolline* is the knife traditionally used by witches. It normally has a white handle and a curved blade. It is used to cut plants and herbs, wands and the other things that need to be cut as part of making magic. When something has to be cut from a living plant it should be done very gently– indeed some Wiccans ask the plant's permission before cutting and thank it for its generosity afterwards.

The *Book of Shadows*, also known as a grimoire, is the journal in which witches keep a record of the spells they cast, the chants and invocations they use, the dreams they dream and other matters that are pertinent to their personal magic making.

*Bowls* are very necessary items in the witch's cupboard. One is used to keep salt and another for water but the efficient witch usually has several more to hand in case they are needed in a particular spell – to keep herbs in, for example.



*Broomsticks* are usually the first thing that people think of when the word ‘witch’ is mentioned – and it is hard to stop a mental picture of a black-robed crone zooming across the night sky coming to mind. Broomsticks are traditionally known as besoms in the world of witches and spell casters and are much more than a fantasy and imaginary mode of transport; they are used to sweep out negative influences from the area to be used for magic making.

A *burin* is a sharp-pointed instrument for inscribing candles and other magical objects and is often more practical than a bolline, especially when inscribing candles.

*Candles* are absolutely essential. It is almost impossible to make magic without one. They are used in literally thousands of spells. Efficient makers of magic ensure that they have a large store of them in all sizes and appropriate colours. Before they are used in magic making rituals, candles are often ‘dressed’ with essential oils and loaded with herbs to make them more powerful.

*Cauldrons*, like broomsticks, are another thing that comes to mind on hearing the word ‘witch’. They are used to mix lotions and potions but they don’t have to be the round, black, mine-like thing that is associated with ‘hubble, bubble, toil and trouble’. Any suitable heatproof vessel will do as long as it has been properly consecrated.

*Chalices* are used for drinking consecrated liquids during magic making, especially when more than one spell caster is present. Some people use elaborate, metal ones studded with semi-precious stones; others enjoy the simplicity of crystal or glass. It's a matter of personal choice.

*Charcoal* is often used to burn incense. Herbs strewn over glowing charcoal are also a part of many spells. Like everything else it has to be consecrated before use. Efficient spell casters usually consecrate a large bag that they dip into when needed.

*Censers* are used to burn incense. They are mounted on metal feet so that the heat of the burning charcoal will not damage the surface on which they rest.

*Compasses* are used by practical witches to establish north, south, east and west – essential in traditional magic making if they are weaving their spells in unfamiliar territory!

*Cords* are used to create magic circles in which to weave spells and also in spells that are cast to create binding magic.

*Crystals* are used for the power they add to a spell and also for altar decoration. Every spell caster has his or her favourite one, which they know from experience works for them. Each crystal has its own power. It's a matter of finding out what works best for the individual.

*Essential oils* are commonly used in spells on their own, to dress candles or are added to incense which is to be burned in the censer. Essential oils are powerful and should never be swallowed or, with one exception, rubbed directly on to the skin unless diluted in a suitable carrier oil such as almond. The exception is lavender, which is one of the most popular and is often drizzled into a ritual bath to add fragrance to the warm water. Pregnant women should be especially careful when using essential oils: some can cause adverse reactions that can affect the unborn child.

*Herbs* are widely used when making magic. They can be easily obtained from shops and markets and many are just as easily grown in a garden or window box. Not only is this cheaper but when they are growing their pleasing smell wafts into the house when the wind is blowing in the right direction. Herbs can be strewn on glowing charcoal, added to smouldering incense or used to anoint candles. Herbs make wonderful charms carried in a handbag or wrapped in a piece of natural cloth and kept in a pocket.

*Incense* is used in either powder, cone or stick form to represent the element of air. Traditionally it should be placed and burned on the east end of the witch's altar.

*Pens* are used for entering items in the Book of Shadows. Like everything else used in making magic, the spell should be consecrated before use. Some spell makers prefer a quill pen as they give a continuance of tradition from the days before fountain, ballpoint and felt-tip pens were invented.

The *pentagram*, a five-pointed star, the sides of which are inter woven with one another, can be drawn without lifting pen from paper. A *pentacle* is a pentagram with a circle drawn round it. Both can be either physical, made of wood, metal, stone or clay, or imaginary. An object with an abstract pentacle



or pentagram woven over it, or a physical one placed on it is protected against evil.

The top point of the star represents the spirit, and is often coloured white or purple. Moving round clockwise, the next point represents air, which is associated with the colour yellow. Next comes earth, usually coloured green. Moving round, fire, coloured red in multicoloured pentagrams, is next. And lastly comes water, associated with the colour blue. Talismans have long been confused with amulets, but there are distinct differences between the two.

*Talismans* are used as magical charms to attract wealth, happiness and harmony whereas amulets repel evil and protect those whom their power is directed from. Also, talismans are prepared for a special reason while amulets serve a general purpose. Lastly, talismans are endowed with supernatural power. Like amulets, talismans can be worn as jewellery, carried in bags and used in rituals to encourage magic making to work. Their long history dates back thousands of years. The Egyptians used charms in their magic making and also in their funerary rites designed to guide the spirits safely across the threshold of death. According to long-held beliefs, talismans are said to lose their powers after a year and a day, but some people who believe in the powers of charms claim that a talisman is active for as many as nine years. Whichever, when the power with which a talisman has been charged has left it, it is buried in the earth or cast into the sea as a tribute to Mother Earth.

A *wand* is to spell making as an egg is to an omelette, that is to say absolutely essential. It is used to draw magical symbols on the ground or in the air, to direct energy and call upon the power of The Lady. It can be made of crystal or cut, lovingly, from a tree. Some spell casters decorate their wands with signs of the rune, others insert a crystal into the point.

## **The Elements**

Source: Michael Johnstone (2003)

According to the Ancient Greeks, the universe is made of four elements: earth, air, fire and water, and the non-material world by ether or spirit. These elements play a vital part in casting spells today. They are summoned to attend magic making rituals. They are usually called in along with the quarters when a circle is drawn. They can be summoned to stand outside and guard the circle or as witnesses to ritual and spells to be cast. It is not always necessary to

summon all the elements: a spellcaster weaving magic concerned with issues of sex, love or transformation may only summon fire. If matters emotional and concerning adaptability were concerned, water would be summoned. Earth is called upon for its stability and potential for encouraging growth and birth, air for magic concerning commination or ideas.

After a spell weaving ceremony is over, the elements are thanked for giving their blessing and adding their power to the magic that has been made.

*Spirit* is the most esoteric, perceived, as it is, as an energy that is the driving force behind creation.

*Air* is associated with communication, education, the intellect, wind and sound. It values anything new and untried and is always keen to learn. Yellow is the colour ascribed to air which, for the purpose of magic making, resides in the east. The zodiac signs associated with air are Aquarius, Libra and Gemini. Air is exciting.

*Fire* fills us with passion that burns inside all of us, more fiercely in some than in others. It is linked with courage and encourages risk and recklessness: once it has started it goes on until it has burnt itself out. Aries, Leo and Sagittarius are the fire signs. Fire is red in colour and south in its direction. Earth is associated with beauty, growth and nurturing abundance. It represents prosperity, wisdom and sensation.

*Earth* is the element of our flesh and bones. It has qualities of steadfastness and dependability, endurance and protection. In the zodiac, Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn are all earth signs. Abiding in the north, earth is green in colour.

*Water*, blue in colour and west in direction, is associated with psychic energy, emotion, intuition, and the subconscious. It overcomes difficulties by flowing around them rather than confronting them, but it also has the power of erosion and the power to overcome all things. Those born under the water signs, Scorpio, Cancer and Pisces, share an insight into the ways of others and the ability to feel their joys and pains.

## Consecration

Source: Michael Johnstone (2003)

Everything used in magic making must be suitably consecrated. This may be time-consuming at first, but it needs only be done once, for once consecrated an altar and the things on it remain so, unless another person touches them. If this does happen, whatever has been touched has to be reconsecrated as it will have picked up negative energies from the offender!

Once the place where spells are to be cast has been selected, then is the time for consecration. A quiet space should be selected. It doesn't matter if it is indoors or outdoors, as long as it is a place where work can be done and spells cast undisturbed. The space needs to be cleaned thoroughly. Traditionally a besom is used for this and the task is performed three times – once for the physical world, once for emotional cleaning and once to clean the spirit. When this has been done, it is usual to sprinkle water and salt around the area and to burn some incense.

Now the work surface, or altar, is prepared. It can be a tray, a table, dressing table or an ornately carved piece of furniture. It doesn't matter, for in magic making it's the thought that counts!

On the altar there should be candles, including a silver one to represent The Lady and the moon, and a gold one to represent The Lord and the sun, and a pentagram, a censer, a bowl of water and a bowl of salt, an athame, a chalice, a bell and a wand. Also, crystals and other items that are going to be used regularly should be on the altar.

Everything in place, the altar is then dedicated to whichever power is to be asked to bless the spells to be cast. Wiccans dedicate their altars to The Lord and Lady. Others with no particular belief apart from a deeply held conviction that the forces of nature can be summoned and used for the greater good, may choose to dedicate their altars simply to the Greater Good and the benefit of all.

Traditionally, each of the four elements is then addressed. One way is to say to each in turn, *'Oh element \* \* \* \*. May all negative energies depart, leaving only the positive. This is my will. So be it.'* As the earth is addressed, a banishing earth pentacle is drawn over the bowl of salt on the altar. When the water is being addressed, a banishing water pentacle is drawn over the bowl of water. Similarly, a banishing fire pentacle is cast over the candles when fire is being addressed, and a banishing air one over the incense when it is air's turn.

Now each altar instrument and everything to be used in ritual must be similarly consecrated. Each item should be presented to each of the elements in turn while an appropriate invocation to wash away negative energies, leaving only positive ones, is spoken.

Non-traditionalists may simply focus their energies on each object in turn and visualize energy flowing into it, while asking the force to which they have dedicated the altar to bless it and any working that is to be done with it.

Visualization plays an important part in spell weaving. Many spells call for the magic maker to visualize the object of the spell or the person who will, hopefully, benefit from the spell. There are many techniques that help those interested in visualization to develop the ability to visualize and anyone who is serious about making magic would do well to study them and make himself or herself efficient in the practice. Practising may seem odd, at first, and novices often feel more than a little self-conscious, sitting alone in a quiet room focusing energies on seeing oneself being somewhere else. But exercises such as the one that follows are well worth doing as they help to develop a skill that is very necessary in spell weaving.

Light a candle in a darkened, draught-free room so that the flame can burn as steadily as possible. Sit as still as you can and gaze at the flame allowing it to hold your attention completely. Let the image fill your mind before quickly closing your eyes. Notice how the candle has imprinted itself on the darkness. Hold it there, in your mind's eye, ignoring any change of colour. If it slips to the side, bring it back to the centre and continue concentrating until the image fades completely. Now open your eyes and resume gazing at the candle. Continue in this way for ten minutes, gradually increasing the time that you hold the image of the candle in your mind's eye.

With practise, and from such a simple start, it is possible to develop the ability to undertake the visualization required for even the most advanced magic making.

## **Astrological Signs**

Source: Michael Johnstone (2003)

It takes 28 days for the moon to pass through each of the astrological signs in turn. During these four weeks, she waxes to full glory, then wanes to darkness in which state she stays for three days before appearing as a thin sliver of silver. During the time when she is dark, many magic makers prefer not to cast any spells, choosing instead to meditate, reflect and look ahead to the magic to be done when next the moon lights up the night sky.

When the moon is waxing, it is an ideal time to cast spells that encourage new beginnings. A full moon encourages fertility and fruitfulness. And a waning moon helps spells aimed at easing a burden, be it to do with health or any other such matter.

*Aries (21 March – 20 April)* is the ideal time for spells concerning newstarts as the moon now encourages energy and fresh ideas. And if leadership is an issue, address it by casting a suitable spell during these 28 days.

*Taurus (21 April – 20 May)* is noted for being the dependant sign of the zodiac. Now is the time to cast spells concerning prosperity. And as the sign is ruled by Venus, spells cast to encourage love will benefit from that goddess's power.

*Gemini (21 May – 21 June)* is associated with communication in all its forms, making its lunar ascendancy the perfect time to cast spells concerning travel and communication skills. Many professional writers find that their words flow with particular fluency at this time of year, so perhaps budding authors should tap into Gemini's powers to cast spells aimed at getting that long-delayed project started at last.

*Cancer (22 June – 22 July)* has a nurturing nature often associated with the feminine side of things. Now is the time to aim spells at family matters, friends, emotional matters, health and the home. And as the moon rules Cancer, this feminine energy is especially strong.

*Leo (23 July – 22 August)*, the sign associated with boldness and courage, emboldens the spell caster to make magic concerning success, wealth, recognition and general health. Leo is a generous sign and is especially happy to lend its power to newcomers to the art of making magic.

*Virgo (23 August – 22 September)* encourages self-improvement and is concerned with the intellect, employment and health. Spells cast to encourage an abundant harvest will not be wasted during Virgo's ascendancy and as the sign is noted for attention to detail, it's a good time to cast spells aimed at clarifying the small print of life.

*Libra (23 September – 22 October)* is noted for balance, so spells cast concerning harmony, especially in personal relationships, are particularly potent now. It's also a good time to cast spells to restore a friendship with someone who has fallen out of favour. Libra is also a sign that



smiles on energy, idealism, love, spirituality and popularity, so spells cast concerning matters such as those should work well.

*Scorpio (23 October – 22 November)* is associated with desire and transformation. Use its power to make magic concerning change, be it in your own life or someone else's (change for the good, needless to say). Sex is never far from a Scorpio's mind – and the energy involved incasting a spell concerning sexual matters will not be wasted during these 28 days.

*Sagittarius (23 November – 22 December)* is the acknowledged explorer of the astrological world. Tap into its power to explore the potency of spells concerning travel, transcendence and wisdom, and for getting at the truth of a matter.

*Capricorn (22 December – 20 January)* is identified with ambition, achievement and self-control, so this is a good time to cast spells to help you climb the ladder of success in your career. It's also a good time to think about spells concerning taking on added responsibility, maybe a community project.

*Aquarius (21 January – 19 February)* promotes healing, higher thought and mental health. These are also good days to cultivate new friendships. The heavenly water carrier also aids spells that are aimed at increasing personal freedom and creative expression.

*Pisces (20 February – 20 March)* is a compassionate sign and this is a good time for healing spells. Those who have a talent for dream interpretation may well find that their intuitive powers are especially strong during the four weeks of Pisces' ascendancy.

### *The Lunar Calendar*

