

How to Explore

Pagan Pathways

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Smashwords Edition

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## 1 The Pagan Within

Are *you* a Pagan? You are looking for ‘something more’, but are probably unsure of where to look. So how can you tell? Pagan ways may not be for you, but it is possible to look at the basic issues. This book aims to help you to make an informed decision, and to know your essential self better.

We are all complicit in the damage that has been done to the world. What we decide to do about that (as individuals) is another issue, and a discussion for later. But following any of the Pagan ways does lead to new ways of thinking and seeing. Sometimes new solutions will emerge. This book is not about promoting particular changes in thinking, because they will arise naturally as a result of the practices described here. And they will be your own changes, rather than the suggestions, rules or guidelines of a religion. We will return to these points later. But there are some key questions to ask yourself.

When I think about the world - and my relationship with it - what are my priorities? What do I see as important in life?

How you answer these questions will give some guidance as to whether one of the Pagan ways is right for you. Most people in this modern world were born into some organised religion, however occasional it may have been in their life. Those ways of thinking do leave a mark. Is humankind the pinnacle of creation? Was everything else on Earth created to serve Man and his needs? Be honest. You may doubt that these ideas and beliefs are true, but can still have absorbed them from your early childhood.

Most Pagan religions revere the Goddess, along with her male consort, or at least include goddesses in their pantheon, whereas today’s mainstream religions are patriarchal, and do not allow women an equal place. Pagan religions are rooted in nature and respect for the planet. Other religions create temples, priesthoods and hierarchy. Nature is not a priority.

The most popular Pagan religion today is probably Wicca, the modern version of European Witchcraft. We will use this as the baseline for Pagan thinking in this book, but there are many others, and they will not be neglected, since all Paths have lessons for us.

The word *pagan* comes from the Latin *paganus*, which translates as countryman (a countrywoman would be *pagana*, but the key here is the root, not the gender) and indeed can be applied to anything to do with nature or the countryside. The majority of us these days would be kidding ourselves if we described ourselves as ‘countryman’ or countrywoman’. But for those who consider themselves to be Pagan, there is a truth hidden within this description, and a few simple questions will tell you if the Pagan ways include one that is right for you.

First, consider that ancient Latin word. It was *not* a compliment, but is in fact one of those derogatory words that those who own it have turned into a badge of pride. Two thousand years ago, when much of the world was firmly under the thumb of the Roman Empire, the ruling classes saw homespun wisdom and the simple life as somehow inferior. Religions that have followed have inherited this attitude.

It is interesting to realise that - even millennia ago - whoever and whatever the ruling classes have been, they have considered themselves to be superior in every way to those who lived closer to nature. The peasants, the unskilled, the wanderers, those who cared for the land and did not hold or pursue power were all viewed as somehow less intelligent. Their ideas and beliefs were dismissed as ‘country tales’, and those who ruled were certain that they alone had the monopoly on logic, reason and the technology of the day.

The Romans epitomised this attitude, but they were not the first in this attitude, and certainly have not been the last. They were followed by many others, all around the world.

Everywhere (and whatever they publicly claimed!) the ruling classes have always worshipped power and money, not gods, and pursued these at the cost of all other concerns. They have often openly despised those who cared primarily about the land, and who advocated taking only what they needed from the planet. The pursuit of power (accompanied by the pursuit of money) saw only the need to strengthen, over-produce and over-exploit the world's resources. None of that has changed over the centuries, and it is now evident that the Earth has been seriously wounded as a result.

There are several significant ways in which the Pagan ways differ from most of the other religions of the world, and these questions point you towards the first. Many major and mainstream belief systems do not believe that animals, rocks and trees have souls. They believe that Mankind is the only one to have a soul. Buddhism is one notable exception to this, and many of those who come to one of the Pagan ways have already explored some aspects of Buddhism.

Most organised religions tend to insist that theirs is the 'only way', and that anyone who does not follow their way slavishly and without question is just not making the cut. This unreasonable attitude is at odds with thinking which is sometimes described as 'universalist', in which the seeker allows him or herself to explore, accept and reject ideas from every possible discipline. It is from this open-minded point of view that some find themselves drawn further down the Pagan path.

To fully regard the universe, however, and to respect the planet, we do need to believe that all other creatures are as important as we are, within the scheme of things. The sacred part of something is sometimes referred to as *numinosity*. If we can feel the sacred aspect of other non-humans, we are beginning to enter into Pagan thinking.

Those people who have always lived closer to the land understand this feeling very well, and we can still find it too. Waking at dawn, standing for a few moments in the fresh air and looking up to the sky can bring a great sense of satisfaction and wonder. This is true in cities as well as in the countryside. Just open a window for a few moments! And of course the mysterious depths of a tree or other greenery or the distant view of hills or sea bring immense added bonuses.

The word "witch" actually comes from the old English word "wicce", which means "wise". These were usually good natured people, with natural talents, who largely used their powers and potions to heal people. But of course, all Pagans are not 'Wiccan' in the modern sense, nor would all describe themselves as witches.

The Pagan spirit within you is that part of your core that responds to the Universe with awe and wonder. Allowing yourself to feel the numinosity of the world is your first step in clearer, less prejudiced thinking. To consider the universe as at least as important as yourself is the first step in allowing the spirit of the Pagan within you to grow.

## Exercise

It is not necessary to join covens or deck yourself out in silver jewellery, to be a Pagan. But if you do eventually decide to join the Pagan ranks and take any kind of instruction, you will be asked to keep a (completely private) diary, detailing your progress. If you decided not to join a group of any kind, this is still a good idea.

In European witchcraft - not the only Path available, and certainly not the only one mentioned in this book - this record is known as your personal 'Book of Shadows' and it includes what has been learned from which practice, as well as thoughts, insights and little promptings that seem to have sent by the gods and goddesses. Some include little sketches, or mementoes of a special place or day. Most covens also keep a communal Book of Shadows, often very old, where members can find a wealth of useful background and information.

Unfortunately, many aspiring witches do not use this basic personal tool to its fullest, recording only the words of ritual or the advice of another. Your journal should in fact be more about your feelings, and the twists and turns of life that your spiritual Path can bring. Sometimes decisions are reached, as you progress, and it is important to describe and date these. You may think that a spiritual experience is so dazzling that it will never be forgotten, but in fact they are often difficult to hang on to, and a written account can recall them more fully.

So begin by finding a book to write in. Because this is a special book, make something special of it. Do not just find an old notebook, but treat yourself to some time in a shop that sells good quality - perhaps hardback - notebooks, and browse until you find one that feels right for you. Buy a pen to go with it. Keep these together, preferably somewhere that they will not be picked up by a casual, inquisitive friend. Use them only for writing down your insights, issues, struggles and discoveries. Perhaps certain dreams.

I have used several such books, over the years. They are my personal record of life as a Pagan and as a human being. My current book was given to me by my daughter, and has a leather cover with a leather tie to keep it closed. I owned this book for some years before it became the 'right one for Now'. This sense of 'rightness' is important, because it means that your book will be something that you can love and respect, and therefore you will find it easier to use it for the things that matter.

## 2 The 'Golden Age'

However we regard earlier civilisations now, most people living in those times believed that they had already travelled far from their roots. They were proud of that. Yet texts and literature from most previous civilisations hint sometimes at the idea of a 'golden age', before written or recorded history. This was always viewed as a wonderfully innocent time, when people lived in harmony with the Universe and followed simpler ways. We may now think of some of these long-ago days as a 'golden age', but they in turn always looked back to a golden age of their own.

Strange that although they considered those who lived more simply to be inferior, they could still romanticise their origins. It seems that human beings have always enjoyed the improvements to life that civilisation brings, but as a result they still feel a sense of loss. As if something wonderful and special has been lost with the coming of increased safety and comfort.

Accounts from those times are peppered with stories that describe and explain the beginnings of the world, and the coming of the gods responsible for creation. Often implicit in this is the idea that the gods *will* come back again, bringing a return to that golden time. This is usually seen as a physical return, although logically it need not be.

Yet civilisations by their nature pursue progress in the form of power, territory, knowledge and often quite an impressive degree of technology. No-one then - as now - could imagine living without the comforts and benefits that their era brought. But the Pagan way is not about giving up everything modern and living in a cave with no facilities. It is more a way of thinking, and once we move into Pagan thinking, our priorities will change, and will rearrange themselves.

To imagine that nature is perfect, or that there was once a perfect time, is a mistake. Nature has never been perfect. But it is important to understand that humans have always hankered after that simplicity and closer union with nature, however hard they pursue the material. They feel the absence of closeness with nature as a sense of loss, which is usually very poorly-defined.

Today there are thousands of apparently successful people who find themselves in therapy in an attempt to heal this sense of emptiness. And there are thousands more who try to fill the sense of void within themselves with alcohol or chemicals or unsafe practices. (This topic will be returned to in a later chapter.)

Unfortunately the 'answers' that they seek are not found in any of these, although of course therapy may lead to a greater self-awareness through self-examination. But many of those who are counselled stop short of allowing themselves to make life changes, even when they have gained a degree of self-awareness. Therapy in itself does not make us brave, and it is courage that we really need to find within ourselves, in order to make changes in life.

The temples of the old Mystery Religions were said to carry an inscription above the door - 'Know Thyself'. If you look within yourself and feel that sense of loss or separation from nature, it may be that one of the Pagan ways is for you. But not necessarily.

The preliminary exercises that lead to greater self-awareness, however, will help you along your Path, in whatever direction it takes you. You may find that Pagan thinking can be married to your current religion. You may have lost confidence in the religion that you knew as a child, and increased understanding of yourself and your own needs may take you back towards it, but with greater understanding. Or you may come to terms more clearly with why it annoys you, and decide to turn elsewhere.

Whatever happens, it is important to remember that any belief system should nourish and support you, not damage you psychologically through guilt and constraints. Anything you choose to reject or adopt in life should be your choice, not that of others.

It is important therefore to begin self-examination, before moving further down your Path. This is your first step. You have probably read other books, and it is likely that these will have said something like 'begin by meditating', so that you can progress. A series of guided images is often suggested, and while these have some merit, they are not the actual base-line. Meditation is difficult, a skill to be learned. It is not instant. You need to learn other things and become more comfortable within yourself, before you can hope to master meditation.

These are the steps we must take before we begin.



## Exercise

Meditation is a difficult skill, and will not be acquired overnight. You may already have this skill, and if so you will know that it takes years of practice. Or you may have tried to meditate over the years, and never quite mastered it.

That's okay.

Wherever you are in this scale, it is important to start from a place where you can begin to increase your awareness of the world. There are many books that tell you to sit quietly and comfortably, in a place where you will not be disturbed. However, the implication here is somewhere indoors, and I would suggest that in fact before you begin to meditate, a few breaths of outdoor air will help your brain to settle. A few moments gazing up at the sky, saying Thank You to the Universe - and the gods - is a great way to start.

It may well be that you live in a polluted place, or where it is not easy to walk out early in the morning without quite considerable effort. There are still ways around that. A large photograph or painting of a calm green landscape has actually been shown to calm the minds of those who cannot move very well, or who have no pleasant view.

But comfortably positioning by a window that you can open for a few moments (and closing your eyes, if your view is unpleasant) can also be effective. If you live in an apartment, you might walk down the stairs to collect your mail, and allow yourself a moment looking up the street or up at the sky. If you have a back yard, you may want to stand there quietly for a minute or two. A walk to the nearest shop to collect a newspaper or some small item is also a good way to start.

While you do this, focus upon the world around you. Speak to the Universe. You may simply want to say hello to it, but it is also good to say Thank You for your life and the world around you. When you decide to address a particular god or goddess as a guardian, stay with the one that feels most appropriate for you. There are no rights and wrongs - only a developing sense of who is closest to your heart, and who is watching over you.

Then try to listen. A Thank You to a particular entity will surprise you by producing a response. This is usually felt as a sense of comfort or well-being, as the one who has been addressed allows you to feel their gratitude for your respect and attempt to honour them.

During this exercise, try to breathe more deeply than usual, at least three or four times. This brings enormous benefits which will be discussed in more depth in a later chapter.

Why is this basic approach important? - Because it can be achieved, and because it is essential to begin the day by clearing the head. You may not consider that you need to do this, but in fact even the healthiest of us can benefit from this practise.

Make this part of your daily routine, as far as you can, before you try to begin meditation or anything more complex. There will be days when you cannot do this, but you will find quite quickly that those days are less beneficial to you. I have suggested morning here, because it starts the day right, and allows you to make greater progress along your Path. If you can also repeat this at night, just before bed, you may find that you sleep better, and that your dreams are more significant and helpful.

Those who practise yoga or Qi Gong will want to include a basic move at this point, which is sometimes referred to as saluting the sun, or drawing down the sun. The sun does not have to be visible, of course, but it is about welcoming the day. In this, the arms are raised above the head and held for a few moments (count to eight) while breathing deeply. Then allow your arms to lower carefully, and repeat a few times. This exercise can be done from a sitting position if you are not very steady on your feet, as the main benefits are to the brain and chest, and are an important part of the routine. Further familiar exercise can follow, as you wish, but focussing on the deity while you 'reach' is important.

I once watched a Buddhist monk running round and round a cold, northern field - and juggling at the same time. He was meditating, and had found a way of moving that took him into a meditative state of mind. The possibilities are the ones that work for you.

It is not my intention anywhere in this book to offer you a 'word formula' that you can follow, as a meditative prayer or ritual. I do not believe that it would be right to impose *my* words upon you. Any words that occur to you should be your own, not someone else's. They must feel right for you. If you find a sequence of words that works for you, use them. Perhaps record them in your Book of Shadows. Also keep a record there, of how these practices make you feel. Note the improvements and the pitfalls, and the changes.

The words that work for you will change over time. That's natural, and not to be worried about.

### 3 Balance

One of the key ways in which Pagan religions differ from other religions is that they place great emphasis upon the concept of Balance, within the Universe and within our daily lives. While Witches have been maligned by other religions as evil, selfish and all-consuming, in fact nothing could be further from the truth. To walk a Pagan Path is to become conscious that everything we do, say or even think has an effect upon the Universe. If we decide upon a course of action, there will be consequences. It is important to recognise what those consequences might be, before we act or speak.

Should anyone decide to use Pagan practices for selfish reasons, there are repercussions from the Universe, and they will eventually suffer.

You have probably read elsewhere that a basic rule or 'law' within Wicca (or European Witchcraft) is 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law'. This is a very selfish-sounding approach - and actually a misquotation, as well as a recipe for personal disaster.

The correct version of this is 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law - AND TAKE THE CONSEQUENCES'.

This of course is a whole different scenario. To follow any pagan path, actually requires an increase in 'mindfulness', which is an increased awareness of the world around us and our own impact upon it. It is possible to ask for something - and receive it - but we must accept the consequences, when we do. Those consequences may well include something that we definitely do *not* want, and in fact may bring serious problems that are more difficult to deal with than the original issue. This will be discussed in more depth in later chapters, 'Karma' and 'Wishes and Payment'.

So take care. If you remember however that Balance within the Universe is a key tenet of the Pagan Paths, you will begin to understand why Pagan ways are different from most other religions.

In Pagan thinking and philosophy, the concept of Balance is central because Earth is revered as our Mother. We recognise that she is bountiful and can provide for our needs, and that humans have polluted, over-fished and over-farmed her, so that changes have happened from which she now struggles to survive.

Most other religions have nothing to say about this, except the occasional statement that 'Man has dominion' over the planet and its resources. No thought is given to Balance, and the world has suffered deeply as a result. Droughts have been caused by both human greed and by global warming, and a negative vicious circle has been established.

It may seem that there is little that one individual can do about this, but we should still do everything that we can. If we become aware that something we want can only be obtained at great - disproportionate - cost to the planet, we must consider whether or not we can, in conscience, continue to use it.

You may feel that a discussion of pollution and so on are not what you expect from a book on Pagan ways. But in fact it is central. Earth is our Mother, gives life and supports life. See her as your great Mother, who will always answer you and listen to your woes, and continuing to hurt her becomes that much harder.

Balance means that we must be aware that whatever we do will have consequences, much like the swing of a pendulum, and that these results may not be what we want in the long term.

We must also be aware that how we live our daily lives may affect the whole Balance of the world, and think carefully about how we proceed, as a result.

### Exercise

Now consider the basics of your everyday life. Having read the previous chapter on Balance, examine the small details of your life. This should include your habits, likes and dislikes, and anything that you do regularly.

Once you have done this, consider the consequences of each. You should do this three times. Firstly list the consequences for yourself, secondly for others around you, and thirdly for the Earth in general.

Be honest, especially with the second and third. This is not a test of any kind, just a way of considering yourself in relation to the Universe, and possibly gaining insights about where you stand.

We are all much more conscious of our 'global footprint', these days, and that may be one thing that you may wish to take into account. You may also have habits that are damaging to your health, or which cause problems for those around you.

No-one is asking you to give anything up. What you do and how you behave is up to you, but it *is* important for your growing levels of insight and self-awareness, as a Pagan, that you examine and acknowledge whatever you do. This is indeed a practical application of the rule 'Do what you wilt... but take the consequences'. Once you have considered these consequences, you *may* move towards changes in your life or habits, but again that is up to you.

Keep this list. Add to it sometimes, if you feel like it. Certainly refer back to it, every once in a while, to remind yourself and to consider if any of your attitudes have changed. Note these in your Book of Shadows.

## 4 Guides and Guardians

Central to Pagan thinking is the belief that we all have spiritual guides and guardians. The concept of guides and guardians returns again and again, and of course is not exclusive to Pagan religions. Most major religions speak of angels and spirits. The Hindu religion has demi-gods and in Buddhism there are bodhisattvas. While the exact nature of these might be vague, it is generally agreed that there are spiritual creatures more enlightened than ourselves who watch over the earth and humans, and who can be called upon for guidance or protection at certain times.

In Pagan thinking, spiritual entities do not exclusively protect humans. Trees have their naiads and dryads, hills and the sea have their own gods and spirits. In Europe every well or spring originally had a guardian spirit, and in many places these lived on after the coming of Christianity, their names preserved and adopted as those of saints. Stories associated with them often included the idea of sacrifice for the community.

Christians took this further in some places, where a guardian was not assimilated into the Christian pantheon, to suggest that the old Pagan guardian had required human sacrifice, in an attempt to link Pagan ideas with evil practices. The originals however guarded these places because they were essential to the survival of life - human, vegetable and animal.

There are times in everyone's life when we feel that we have had a 'lucky break' - or perhaps a lucky escape. People are sometimes surprised enough to say 'someone up there must be looking after me'. For Pagans, that 'someone' is not 'up there', but *is* definitely looking after you.

Part of the Pagan Path is to recognise that this 'someone' is there, and to establish a respectful dialogue with them. If you come from the background of any of the major monotheistic religions, you may have absorbed the belief that any such acknowledgement or honoring may come dangerously close to 'worshipping false gods'. In fact being considerate of your guardian or guide is not worship. When shrines are made to commemorate an ancestor, this is not actually worship, but acknowledgement and respect. On the other hand, as you grow in Pagan thinking, you will eventually discover which aspect of the gods speaks most clearly to you, and will want to pay particular respects to that one.

In reality, a 'false god' is one in whom you do not believe in your heart. Your god or goddess is the one who is right for you. While we will return to these issues in a later chapter, 'Gods and Goddesses', it is important to be clear on this point. Integrity in dealing with your gods is essential, as a frivolous or unconsidered approach can lead to real disaster.

One acquaintance of mine decided that he would invoke the goddess Aphrodite, believing that - since she is the Goddess of Love - she would be 'cuddly and fluffy'. Unfortunately for him, *all* major gods and goddesses are in effect tremendous forces of nature. To successfully invoke one could be compared to unleashing a volcano or tsunami. There were physical effects for this young man, which he freely admitted 'nearly killed him'.

It is not of course only Pagan gods and goddesses who carry such power. Jehovah and Allah correctly invoked carry the potential for great destruction. Does the Christian God? Examine history and decide for yourself.

Christian literature has always suggested that witches worship 'the Devil' (who is largely a religious concept originating in the major faiths).

This is not so. Satanists *do* exist, and there are occasional witches who follow that path. However, Satanism is as far from the precepts of Wicca as it is possible to get. The triple Goddess cares for the world, and we anger her whenever we act selfishly. Remember - take the consequences.

So before we align ourselves to any particular deity, we need to become more aware of the other-dimensional life around us, and the potential of what we might be approaching. Belief

in guides and guardians helps Pagans to feel the spirituality or numinosity of the world that we live in.

You will be aware of the image of witches has attended by 'familiar' creatures, who help them in their magical practise. We will look at totems (and 'power animals') later in the book. There is no doubt that some individuals find a benefit from a sympathetic cat, toad or other creature. But just acquiring a pet does not do it. Such animals are much rarer than stories might lead us to believe. Many witches are simply kind to animals, and empathic to their needs.

It is also important to remember that any living creature has free will, and was not put on the planet just to help you in your endeavours. Trees and rocks which contain a spirit that speaks to you are more stable, if you require something concrete as your guide. But respect for all - animal, mineral or tree is essential. We deal carelessly with the spirit of anything at our peril.

A guide or guardian is essentially a spiritual being, or the spirit that lives - either within something or alone in the universe. We however are physical creatures who contain a soul or spirit, which can - with practice - speak to the spiritual world. While this skill can be learned, it takes considerable time and commitment, even for those who are naturally talented. It is not a process that can be rushed, and there are no short cuts. More of this later.

Please do remember that whichever spirit or deity you call up requires your commitment and respect in return. To ask for the guardianship does not come without a cost, which is reasonable. If someone asked you to give of your time, energy and resources, you would not expect them to take you lightly or for granted. Remember your natural guardian may be a deity, a local spirit or an ancestor - but all are capable of anger and repercussions if you do not treat them wisely.

Practical grounding is required, in order to achieve a degree of rapport with the spirit world, so that we can hear them better. But first it is vital to look within yourself and to decide which god or guardian is right for you.

It is not a good plan to pick a name out of a hat. So give some time to developing a little self-awareness. How would you describe yourself? What are the things that matter to you? What places or things are you drawn to? Is there a time in history that calls to you? Where in the world would you like to live or explore?

Are there particular principles by which you would like to live your life?

Now you should stop, and begin to develop a clear impression of yourself - in all these terms and in any other terms that occur to you. Once you have learned a little more about yourself, you can begin the practical training that allows you to listen more readily to the advice and guidance of those in the spirit world who care for you, and who appreciate your reverence and respect.

## 5 Gods and Goddesses

Those who criticise Pagan thinking often decry the idea of multiple gods - and horror of horrors - half of these are goddesses. In Wicca, the Triple Goddess reigns supreme. A difficult concept for those in modern major faiths.

Why should this present a problem?

During recorded history, societies have been patriarchal, ruled by men. (It is believed that there were matriarchal societies *before* recorded history, and that some small isolated groups still persist in matriarchy.) All religions that reflect the will of the ruling classes are therefore patriarchal, and fail to accord an equal status in the universe and in society.

Yet Pagan religions everywhere stand against this attitude. In effect Pagans have always provided the 'underground' which survives in every culture, to challenge the power and the status quo of the ruling authorities. Priests and religious leaders from major religions of every description have wielded considerable power over the centuries. They have never hesitated to slander, damage and even to kill anyone who did not toe the party line.

'Witch' was never a compliment from these authorities, who did not hesitate to adjust the scriptures for their own ends, so that they could bring questioning women to trial and to death. It is also worth noting that the Biblical quotation 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live' is actually a mistranslation, which reads 'Thou shalt not suffer a *poisoner* to live' in the original Hebrew.

Despite this, Pagan thinking has always survived.

Hinduism, which does not worry itself about monotheism, has huge numbers of goddesses, including very senior ones. The other major religions make much of their 'monotheistic' aspect. Yet close examination of their scriptures betray certain double standards. The monotheism of Christianity is in fact a trinity of three entities, and one of these ('the Holy Spirit') was originally described as feminine. The Virgin Mary has her own devotees, and fills a need for the feminine in Christian theology. The Talmud contains references to Shekinah, described sometimes as 'the feminine aspect of God' and also to Sophia, which translates as 'Wisdom'. There are female Bodhisattvas in Buddhism. And so on.

In Pagan thinking, the figure of the Goddess is very important, and may even be seen in some circumstances as more important than her male counterpart. But more usually, Pagans strive to recognise the male/female balance among deities, as in the universe. Pagan thinking recognises that duality exists, and that to venerate one aspect (or the characteristics associated with one gender) in life is to create immediate and disastrous imbalance. Remember how important the concept of Balance is, in Pagan thinking.

In Native American cultures, although the men ran society, it was customary for a woman to be invited into serious discussions, so that she could offer the point of view of the wife, mother and daughter. Her contribution was always recognised as carrying immense weight, once again providing the essential Balance.

When you begin to explore which of the gods and goddesses you feel most drawn to, there is a huge selection. It would not be possible to list them all, since each culture deserves a book to itself, and there are many of those. It is for this reason that I have encouraged you to look first at which culture appeals to you.

I would also remind you that you are not bound to associate yourself with your own gender, or with gods and goddesses from only one culture. It is easy - but inaccurate - to think that the Roman pantheon equates to the Greek, for instance, with different names. Zeus and Jupiter are not exactly interchangeable, although they might be thought to be so, because each has absorbed aspects of their home culture, and carry different stories.

You may also feel drawn to one deity at one time in your life, and another as circumstances change. This is not a problem, as long as you are always respectful in your spiritual dealings. So allow your dialogue with them to grow out of your daily meditation.

The Goddess, like her 'male' counterpart, has many aspects. But in traditional Celtic and Wiccan thinking, she is seen as a trinity in her own right, the Triple Goddess. She embodies the aspects of the Maid, the Mother and the Crone. At different times in your life, one of these aspects will become more important to you than the others, but the fact that all three are within her allows us to find her support as we move from one phase of life to another.

Never make the mistake of imagining that a goddess is in any way less powerful, forceful or ready for anger and revenge than a god. It has been said in nature that 'the female of the species is more deadly than the male', and anyone who has seen a female protecting her young will not doubt this.

Her consort is the Horned God, also known as Herne the Hunter, the Green Man and as Cerunnos. He is a powerful god in his own right, firmly rooted here on Earth, but whose horns denote a reaching out to the heavens. Traditionally he is seen as having the head and torso of a man, but animal legs and cloven hoofs.

This image was adopted by Christians when they wanted a concrete picture of the Devil, and so it is hard for many modern humans to shake the image of something evil. And yet he is kind and protective to all the creatures of the forest, great and small. 'Green Man' carvings are found in older churches, indicating that this site was holy, long before Christianity came.

Whenever we are kind to wild creatures, we are doing his work - and invoking him, although he will never be seen by chance. To meet with him takes serious commitment and a specific ritual sequence.

The Horned God is not just there for men and their devotions, any more than the Triple Goddess is for women. These two together contain all the attributes and characteristics of both male and female, *Both* embody bravery and compassion, as well as knowledge. In this, they provide the Balance of 'male' and 'female' characteristics. We should always remember to strive for that Balance within ourselves as individuals. No true Pagan Pathway can be found by excluding attributes from either 'end' of the scale.

Whichever god or goddess you decide to align yourself to, the bottom line is very much about integrity, being true to yourself. It may well not be possible to choose one immediately, but does not matter. You need to know yourself first. So it is important is to listen. Allow yourself to be open to the concept of a Guardian, and then relax and trust, while you discover who that might be.

In the New Testament (Acts of the Apostles) Paul is described on his travels as coming to a place with a huge number of shrines to different gods and goddesses. He decides however to visit the shrine dedicate 'to the Unknown God'. Not a bad tactic. Gods do not always share their names readily. You may have to earn that insight. But in the meantime, calling upon 'the Unknown God - or Goddess' is definitely a sensible first step.

Your deity will be revealed in time.



## Exercise

Learn what you can about your chosen guardian. Imagine them as fully as you can. But be prepared for surprises. The first step is to listen to your guide - but what you *think* you know about them may not be the truth that they want you to know. Accept what they let you know.

Meditation is part of the daily routine for most Pagans, and takes many forms. If you have ever practised yoga or martial arts, you have looked at some of them. If you have practised Zen or Tibetan Buddhism, you will be familiar with others. This is also true if you have spent time in a Christian retreat or sat in Quaker Meeting. Shamanistic training often begins with learning to soul travel in a way that includes visualisation, as you move your consciousness into another 'subtle' realm. This form of meditation allows shamans to meet with gods, goddesses, spirits, totems and archetypes. Some of these rely upon ritual, others do not.

While reading around is important, it is essential that you do not simply pick up a book or sign up for a class, in order to extend your meditative skills. There is no substitute for simple daily practice. Any previous meditative experience should be built upon, using whatever rituals are familiar to you, if you find them necessary.

At the beginning of this book we considered the basics. Somewhere to sit quietly and comfortably. As you progress, you may well find that you increasingly want this to be somewhere out of doors, and a quiet setting will reveal itself to you, in its own time.

The next part of meditation is stilling the mind, and this is followed by listening. Stilling the mind is quite difficult in the beginning, so it is possible to consider this sequence from another angle. Firstly, consider the deity or spirit that 'speaks' to you.

To focus your mind, begin a silent, respectful conversation with your guide.

Should you join a group as you begin the journey along your Path, you will find that you are expected to use words and rituals that are someone else's. You may read good books which describe sequences of words and actions. But sometimes these *can* prove counter-productive. It may be best to walk your path for yourself. Your practice will continue as long as your relationship grows with your guardian.

All that remains is to make sure that meditation becomes a natural part of your daily routine. Listen to the voice of the guardian. Remember to say thank you, and always to be respectful.

## 6 Chakras

Chakras are the subtle energy centres of the body, and have been recognised through the millennia by different cultures. They are visualised as a range of colours, and are an important part of healing and spiritual journeying.

Witches and shamans in previous times developed the ability to see and use chakras, but the name itself is eastern. Modern witches and shamans have absorbed the concept of chakras into their practice very readily. Where once an individual witch or a coven envisaged the body's energy, now we have adopted more international terminology.

Pagan religions, in common with other religions, do not believe that the world that we perceive every day is the only reality. Where they differ is in beliefs about the nature of the Otherworld. This extends to beliefs about life after death, and its form.

In Pagan religions, there is no hellfire and brimstone, and certainly no eternal damnation for those found wanting. Heaven and Hell are images which support the fear that characterises other beliefs systems. After death, pagans believe that they travel to Summerland - which is as pleasant as it sounds, and rural in character. Here they spend time being healed and refreshed, and learning some of the basics that will be needed for their next incarnation. They may continue to work to help others, even from here. The nature of their next incarnation is discussed, since here - as in everything - to strive for the Balance is the vital issue. Pagans describe very similar experiences and recollections of Summerland.

But how can they do this? How can they have memories of life after Death?

The simple answer is - as meditations progress, some *do* have such memories. We will return to this in a later chapter. And many pagans master the art of travelling to the Otherworld, while still very much alive, to learn its lessons and to expand their knowledge.

A knowledge of the chakras is a very good way to start this process, but we will return to that shortly. It is important to spend time becoming completely familiar with them, before beginning to use them. But this is not difficult. In eastern traditions, the chakras are said to describe a 'snake' of power, *Kundalini*, which is central to our existence, and which may be imagined as rising through the body from the base of the spine, to the top (or crown) of the head.

In evolutionary terms, life was originally contained in simple single-cell organisms, which lived in the sea. (In ancient Babylon, the Goddess of creation was Tiamat - whose name actually means 'the Sea'. The association of creation and the sea is echoed in other cultures, too.) These tiny creatures developed, learning how to increase by splitting, and then forming larger organisms. The first creatures on earth are said to have been fish, some of which came ashore as reptiles. First these crawled and then developed limbs. Huge versions of these developed, and dinosaurs roamed the earth. Birds and mammals followed.

A human foetus grows from the combination of two cells, and then follows this process surprisingly closely, through cumping of cells and tiny aquatic creature to the human that it will eventually become. Our limbic (instinctive) system, which predates consciousness, stays with us all through our lives, although of course as fully formed humans we live in the world of conscious thought and concrete experience. Yet we carry this other mode of perception within us, and during times of stress or danger it can prove itself essential to survival. 'instincts' can and do save lives.

Because the chakras are closely aligned to the activities of certain glands and organs, they also have strong links with the endocrine system.

Pagans, because of their commitment to live more closely involved in the Universe, value 'instincts' and learn to listen to their 'gut feelings'. As they make progress along their spiritual path, increasingly they learn that they ignore such feelings at their peril. Growing in

this way, they practice using and extending their limbic systems. The 'snake' which embodies human power can be woken and more fully utilised.

Therefore we practice - using chakras within meditation, and looking for them in others, whenever we practice healing.

It is important, therefore, to become familiar with chakras. Learn about them first, and then begin to use them as part of your daily meditation. This is unlikely to be a simple, instant process. Bear in mind that you are now beginning to work with the key energy centres of your own being. These are not yet fully open, and every human being contains blocks in some of them. Those will prove harder to assimilate, but patience is essential, and you have all the time in the world. You will return again and again to chakra work, in many forms, but you may find it best to work with them one at a time, to begin with.

The first of the chakras is found at the base of the spine, roughly in the area from the rectum to the navel, and is known as *Muladhara* in eastern terminology. This is usually perceived as a spinning red ball of energy or symbolised by a red, four-petalled lotus flower. Physically, the root chakra governs sexuality and the genitals, the adrenal glands for survival. It also has links to the sense of smell (which in less evolved times was a vital part of the survival package). Working with the adrenal glands means that it is responsible for the fight-or-flight instinct, which should always be kept healthy.

Emotionally the root chakra governs sensuality. Witches feel very strongly about their right to be sexual beings, and also often use magic linked to the act of making love. As you progress along your Pagan Pathway, you may well find that your sensuality - as well as your sexuality - is increased. The whole universe becomes a more physically exciting and beautiful sensory experience. Because this is such a vital aspect of witchcraft, we will return to it in more than once in later chapters. But for now it is important to learn about the root chakra, and how to access it.

Mentally the root chakra governs stability, and spiritually it governs a sense of security. Both of these are base-lines for us to function fully, and this combination also means that it is influential in the realisation of human potential. When we look (later in this chapter) at 'opening' and working with the chakras, you will see that the root chakra is the most usual place to start in the sequence. We need to open and encourage all the aspects of the root chakra, so that we can provide a strong base for the lessons and practices that lead us towards fuller personal potential.

Second is the Sacral Chakra, known as *Swadhisthana* in eastern terminology, which is found in the sacrum. If you are unsure of the physiology, the sacrum is the triangular bone at the base of the spine and at the upper and back part of the pelvic cavity. Therefore it deals with the testes and the ovaries, and the various sex hormones of the reproductive cycle, the genitourinary system and also affects the adrenal glands.

To envisage the sacral chakra, think of a spinning ball of orange, or a white lotus. This in turn contains a crescent moon, with six vermillion, or orange petals.

Although the second chakra may seem to have a lot in common with the root chakra, it governs relationships, violence, addictions, basic emotional needs, and pleasure, reproduction, creativity, joy, and enthusiasm.

The third chakra is known in eastern terminology as *Manipura* or the Solar Plexus Chakra.

The energy colour to envisage here is yellow, but is also symbolized by a downward pointing triangle containing a flower with ten petals.

The solar plexus chakra is related to the metabolic and digestive systems, the pancreas, the outer adrenal glands and the adrenal cortex. Working with the solar plexus chakra leads to an increase personal power, and changes in levels of fear, anxiety, opinion-formation and introversion. All 'emotional growth' issues are associated with the solar plexus chakra, which allows us to become more expansive and generous of spirit.

Fourth is *Anahata*, or the Heart Chakra. It is usual to think of this chakra as green (for growth) although sometimes it is envisaged as pink. This chakra is symbolised by a circular flower with twelve green petals. The intersecting triangles within form a hexagram, symbolising the union of the male and female. Once again the Balance at the heart of a growing and developing human being is emphasized.

The heart chakra is located at the heart, and so governs both the emotions and the capacity for love, as well as playing a central part in general health, especially the health of the circulatory system, which relies upon a healthy heart. But it is also close to the thymus gland, which is important in the body's immune system and is part of the endocrine system. The thymus is where T cells mature, which are responsible for fending off disease. Their formation can be adversely affected by stress.

The heart chakra governs emotions and their perception, including compassion, tenderness, unconditional love, equilibrium, rejection, passion, devotion and well-being. The heart chakra is extremely important in Tibetan Buddhism, where it is as carrying our consciousness to our next lives, and for realising the Clear Light

Fifth in the sequence is the Throat Chakra, *Vishuddha*, which is seen as blue in colour, and as a silver crescent within a white circle, which contains sixteen pale blue petals. This chakra governs communication, independence, fluent thought, security and growth through self-expression, and supports the thyroid gland.

As you progress along your Pathway, you may develop the skills of lucid dreaming and astral travelling. The throat chakra should be developed to help you do this. It is important however not to attempt these too soon. A friend of mine reports that the first time she (successfully) attempted these techniques, she had the sensation (within her astral body) that one of her arms was raised in the air. Because she was unsure how to return safely, she lost all feeling in that arm for twenty-four hours. So beware.

Sixth is the Brow Chakra, *Ajna*, also known as the 'third eye'. It is closely linked to the Pineal and Pituitary glands. This is symbolized by a lotus with two petals, and is seen as violet or indigo.

The Brow Chakra has many functions. It governs sleep and awakening, intuition, visual consciousness, balancing the higher and lower selves and trusting inner guidance.

Seventh is Sahasrara, white in colour, the Crown Chakra, which means 1000 petalled lotus. This is the chakra of pure consciousness, located either at the crown of the head, or just above the crown of the head. This chakra deals with inner wisdom, consciousness, karma, meditation skills, emotional action and the death of the body.

When you have familiarised yourself with the chakras, you will find that you have a basis for the work that follows, to take you along your pathway.

## Exercise

It is now time to begin using the chakras as part of your routine. The best way to do this is to begin by envisaging them, one at a time, during your daily meditation. It is usual to begin with the base chakra, moving slowly upwards. But everyone has at least one chakra in which there are subtle blockages, and which do not open or develop as easily as others. If the base chakra is particularly difficult for you, it is also acceptable to begin at the crown, and work downwards.

Sitting quietly, having taken a few breaths of fresh air (and perhaps having moved your muscles in gentle exercise first) picture the red spinning ball of energy that is the base chakra. Eastern disciplines speak of allowing the 'inner winds' of active spirituality into the chakras, one at a time, to energise them.

Focussing upon a chakra allows you to clear your mind of other intrusions. The chakra thus allows your meditative practice to become a positive circle, rather than causing a stumbling block. This is something that you need to spend time over. It is not possible to tackle all the sequence of chakras at once. Master them one at a time, building another in to your meditation, when you are comfortable.

Do make sure that you fully visualise each one, both in terms of colour and in function. The sequence of chakras is inter-dependent, and you must always strive to keep each one fully functioning.

The advantages of working chakras into your meditation are many and powerful. Firstly, as each chakra is opened and strengthened, you grow in different ways, both spiritual and physical. Chakras associated with areas of the body where you have a physical problem can help to alleviate your symptoms. If you have an emotional imbalance or spiritual 'block', working harder with the right chakra can help. Fully open each of them.

When you begin to look at working in otherworldly dimensions, including shamanic soul-journeying, you may want to approach these other states via the safe place you have created in the meditative condition. If you then use visualisation of the chakras as a 'ladder' (usually down) to that other world, you will visualise the redness of the base chakra first, descending next to the orange sacral and so on, through all the rainbow colours of the chakra sequence. Working in this way takes you, once you have mastered it, to a deeper safe place, from which you can step out into the other world, and meet your guardians, gods, goddesses, totems and archetypes.

You will find that sometimes other people's energy centres are becoming visible to you, especially if they are disturbed or muddy in colour. When you come to the day that you want to help people by healing, it is important to visualise the chakra that is blocked or unhealthy in its purest form. This will encourage healing.

Energetic imbalance within the chakras brings a continuous feeling of dissatisfaction. This leads again to a sense of loss and separation, and a growing (external) search for fulfilment. Substitutes for Balance such as alcohol or chemicals only exacerbate the problems and separation, however.

We are creatures who need to balance intellect with feelings and emotions. As you become more comfortable with the chakras, you will see that none of them should be developed at the expense of another. Working with chakras as part of your daily meditation is not just an exercise, but a lifelong commitment to Balance.

## 7 Wishes and Payment

In popular imagination, Pagans - and especially witches - are often associated with the ability to grant wishes or to alter a life. Old folk tales are full of 'good witches' and 'bad witches' who offer gifts. And there are always consequences.

Of course, there is often an overlay of Christian (or other official religion) in the telling of these stories, which can sometimes be easier than others to pick out. But there is usually also a background of 'folk' understanding, too, where developing witches are quietly counselled to remember that whatever they say or do (for good or evil) will carry more than the original hoped-for effect.

How much of the wisdom hidden in old stories is true? How seriously can such claims be taken? Are there those amongst us who can see into our hearts, or offer solutions provided by the Universe, when we feel trapped or lost?

Can wishes be granted that will give improved living conditions?

All of these questions can be answered positively. As you progress along your Pagan pathway, you will find an increased talent within yourself for dealing with them. But it is important once again to remember that the Law states 'Take the consequences' and to know that you are unlikely to be able to see all of the consequences that exist. As human beings, we all have a talent for only consciously registering the outcomes that we hope for. Dangerous and disruptive outcomes are usually ignored, if they are seen at all.

The 'rule of three' (also sometimes known as 'the law of threefold return') was strongly promoted by the great Wiccan occultist, Gerald Gardner, and has been adopted by many modern Pagans in their beliefs and practices. Here Gardner stated "Mark well, when thou receivest good, so equally art bound to return good threefold". This precursor to the 'threefold law' suggests the benefits from working positively with magic, by approaching the results from a different angle to that usually thought of today. The idea of an actual 'threefold law' only dates from the late 1970s.

Newcomers and initiates to covens *are* usually advised that whatever they work at magically will be returned upon them, threefold. Therefore if an individual works at damaging another, while they will achieve their objectives, they will be unable to avoid a considerable amount of damage themselves. Similarly, good, helpful or positive magic will have a beneficial effect upon the practitioner. This guidance is now so universally offered that it has achieved the status of a 'law'.

Is any of this guidance true? Perhaps. Many modern witches argue against it, - although it is very sound advice at another level, as we will see later. Certainly there are many who discount the rule, and point to many examples of work that does not seem to have obeyed the 'triple law'. Others are certain that this is an essential part of how we must live, to stay personally safe when we commit to walking a Pagan pathway through life. It is dangerous to believe oneself capable of magical intervention, without recognising that there will be *consequences* for the practitioner.

But the threefold law is not universally held, and is in fact more of a warning that magic can rebound, than an actual law. While the warning should be heeded, the reality is that this rule does not fit the definition of 'law'.

In a later chapter, we will examine the concept of karma, and at that point this 'rules of returns' will be discussed again, but in a slightly different (longer term) context. For now, we must return to the reality of what it means to live as a Pagan in today's world.

Some Pagans interpret this rule as a warning that whenever they act, there will be three types of consequences for us, - physical, emotional and spiritual. Whenever we act, we must examine what the result will be for our own minds, bodies and souls.

‘Take the consequences’ *is* a rule that every witch should live by. We have already discussed the concept of Balance within self and within the Universe, as a central tenet of Pagan thinking. As soon as we begin to take steps towards a closer involvement with the Universe, we realise that every one of our thoughts and actions carries consequences, because the Universe constantly strives to maintain its Balance.

It is possible to act in these ways, but whenever we do, the ‘pendulum’ of the Universe’s needs is increasing likely to swing back against us. Always accept responsibility for what you do, and avoid irresponsible (greedy, selfish or cruel) behaviour. While the threefold law is a modern invention it is true that should you choose to use your growing power for selfish ends, the Universe itself will eventually reverberate against you.

This is not always visible to others, but it happens. There are certainly those who use the Craft to bring material wealth and success to themselves. Their success is hollow, however. Those who create imbalance also create a void within themselves, and find themselves addicted to increasingly dangerous practices. When we approach the Universe, asking for a favour, there is always a cost, so that the Balance can be maintained.

When we approach our deities or guardians, it is important to remember certain things. Firstly - as with any request - you may ask for something, and the answer may be no. Individuals of all faiths have a tendency to say ‘God didn’t answer’ when in fact what has happened is that ‘God didn’t say Yes’.

Secondly, when you approach the gods, they will be very literal in their response, so do be careful exactly how you phrase your request. ‘Joanne’ was sure that she wanted a particular job, and that was what she got. But it was a dreadful experience for her. She was unhappy almost from the start.

Thirdly - and moving on from Joanne’s experience - ask the right question. Her request ‘please let me get this job’ would have been better phrased ‘please let me get a job where I can be happy and fulfilled’.

The importance of the ‘right question’ cannot be over-stressed. ‘Andrea’ explained to me one day that she began every day with a prayer to the gods - an admirable statement. Most of us do the same, as we greet the day and the world, and say thank you for what we have. Andrea then went on to say that her daily prayer was ‘what can the Universe give to me today?’

I have shared this anecdote with many witches, including those of higher degrees, and all are chilled by Andrea’s misunderstanding of ‘the right question’. For most of us, the right question to include in daily meditation is ‘What can I *give* to the Universe today?’ Time and again, to offer our services to the gods in this way, is to invite their blessings and support, not their anger.

We will take this discussion further in the next chapter, ‘Karma’, and it is at this point that you may come to issues that will let you decide whether or not you truly are a Pagan, and whether the Pagan Pathways really are for you.

## 8 Karma

Karma is twofold in nature, and a powerful part of the Balance of the Universe. On the one hand, karma involves our actions in this life, which also have results in this life. On the other hand, it involves actions in this (or a previous) life, which have results and consequences in a later life.

Karma is not an easy concept for us in the west, and yet it is - along with reincarnation - a belief that was accepted by our Pagan ancestors, and which forms an important part of Pagan belief today. Karma is more than a simple balancing of acts, or a series of punishments. Old traditional folk stories warn that if you choose to live selfishly, by preying upon the vulnerable, you will in the end become prey yourself.

If you were brought up as a Christian, you may well find the concept of reincarnation difficult, and may even have a few misconceptions about it. You may have the idea that Karma is simply about reward and punishment, and that rewards are always improved physical and material lives. In fact, a life lived in simplicity and without the weight of wealth may be a better 'reward' for a previous life well-lived. In the east, to become a monk (and therefore without power or possessions) is a prized outcome.

In Shamanic work, we practise soul journeying, and aim to discover what we agreed (while we were between lives) to do in this lifetime, in order to move our souls along their Path. Karmic work is not quite the passive approach to life that many believe it to be.

But in the Christian Bible, there are also hints that reincarnation was an acceptable concept to Jesus and his contemporaries. When a man (blind from birth) was brought to Jesus for healing, the question was asked - 'Was it this man who sinned, or his parents? Curiously the answer given is *not* 'Don't be foolish. This man has been blind from birth. If he sinned (to 'cause' it) that must have been in a previous lifetime, and reincarnation is rubbish'. Instead the concept of Karma is accepted and understood. The Qu'ran also warns that evil-doers may have to pay, 'for five thousand lifetimes'.

To a modern Pagan, as to our Pagan ancestors, we are not 'material beings with a soul', as described in major modern religions. Rather, we are spiritual beings with a human form, and it is here on the physical plane that we work though (and sometimes struggle with) the lessons that are right for this lifetime.

We will return to this concept and its practical applications later. But for now it is time to discover how difficult the idea of Karma is going to be, for you personally.

Earlier I asked you to look within yourself, and to note what times and places speak to the inner core of your being, and now we must return to that exploration. There is no doubt that everyone has been somewhere, or seen something which seems to cut through the everyday being that we inhabit. We feel that something 'rings a bell', deep inside us. The feeling is momentary, and scientists who deny the existence of souls insist that this is simply an electrical aberration in the cortical activity of the brain.

But the feeling (when it happens) is striking. It is as if we live our lives on the top step of a stairway that is just above sea level. We never bother to look down, because we are safe on the tiny space that we inhabit. But sometimes something floats towards us, and a wave nudges our feet. When that happens - just for a moment - we may find ourselves uncomfortably aware of the vastness of the Universe, and how tiny we are within it.

If you do find that belief in Karma is not for you, you are not precluded from the Pagan Pathways. You should not worry or think that it is essential to embrace a concept that is alien to you, at this time or at any other time in the future. I would advise that you look at the suggestions in this book for making progress, and if this one does not work for you and is difficult to accept, you should move on without it.



However, do not discount it completely. As you progress along your pathway, you will find that your consciousness expands and you will become increasingly aware of your relationship with the world - both physical and spiritual. Therefore it is important to keep an open mind, in case the day comes when the idea of reincarnation does not seem so impossible.

Now is a good time to look again within yourself, but during your meditation time. So far we have used meditation to several ends. Firstly, to still the mind. Then to address the gods. Also to develop the chakras, - a precursor of soul journeying. Now another exercise can be developed to help you along your Path.

## Exercise

Begin by establishing yourself in meditation, by emptying your mind. You have already made progress in this, and have already established a daily routine, in which you speak to your gods or guardians, say Thank You, and have learned to listen for their loving response.

Now, close your eyes. In this exercise your eyes will remain closed, but after a while, you will 'open' them within the meditation. Then you will begin to see an aspect of the Otherworld, although your physical eyes remain closed.

If you have a sequence of actions that help you to reach the meditative state, complete this first, and do not skimp on the time this takes. Now allow yourself to feel that you are walking steadily, and think only about the imagined movement of putting one foot in front of the other, while keeping your breathing steady, your body comfortable and your eyes closed. Breathing and body should not interfere with the progress of this exercise. Although you have been practising stilling your mind, you should now allow your meditation to experience some physical sensations - which are not actually happening to your physical body.

Once your focus is established, allow your brain to register how your body feels. Is it warm or cold? Can you feel wind or rain? Are you weary or full of energy? Pause in your meditative walk. Mentally open your eyes. Do *not* open them physically. Look down at your feet (mentally) and observe what (if any) footwear you have on. Notice the 'clothes' that you are wearing, including anything on your head. Look at your hands and arms. Note the skin colour and condition, and any ornaments. Maintain steady breathing, and do not allow surprise at what you see to break your meditation. Simply notice what you are wearing.

Now, still in meditation, raise your eyes and 'look' around - again without physically opening your eyes. What do you see? Buildings? Hills? Forest? Fields? Water? Desert? Note everything you see carefully. Also notice how you feel about what you see. - This is particularly important, since for many of us feelings can be more powerful (although less clearly defined) than actual visual impressions.

It is important to recognise that this exercise does not usually work wonderfully the first time you attempt it. It is not easy to keep the focus, so you will need to practice. Do not despair. The more you practice, the more comfortable the experience will become, but you must also be prepared to maintain this practice. What you see, hear and smell - and learn about yourself here - is always growing and developing. It will also change over time, when one memory has taught you what it can, and it is time to experience another.

When you have experienced enough for this session, return to consciousness in a controlled way. Do *not* simply open your eyes. You may want to make a habit of counting from one to ten, rising closer to consciousness every time, so that at nine or ten you are ready to awaken.

Make a note of whatever you observed during this meditation, and how you felt about it. Were you happy, angry, proud, afraid, exhausted? In pain? It is good to keep these notes in your Book of Shadows, so that you can read back at other times and see how one experience has led to another.

Beyond a growing sense that you have links to a particular time, place and situation, three things will happen as you continue to practise. Firstly, you will find that events in your everyday waking life begin to coincide with the feelings you have experienced, or to hint at links with that other time.

Secondly, when you meditate, you will see increasing detail, including other people. You should note your responses to these. If later you see a number carved anywhere, it will be a date.

Thirdly, you will begin to become aware of a greater sense of self, in relation to the Universe and to others in your life.

If you have had a difficult relationship with someone close to you all your life, Karma is probably in play. Guilt is often a huge factor in Karmic interaction. In shamanic terms, you are tied to that person and have agreed (in the time between lives) to resolve certain issues. Travelling within meditation in this way can help you to make a start on those issues.

## 9 Festivals

Every religion has its festivals, and each of these have certain activities or rituals associated with them. Although belief is not just for certain days, festivals bring a structure to the year, around which all else revolves. Whenever you think of any belief system, you will probably think of one or more of its festivals. What is celebrated there defines much of the belief system itself.

Festivals serve many purposes. They are distributed throughout the year, providing welcome but regular breaks from everyday life. They provide a focus for different aspects of belief, and allow us to explore ourselves in different ways, in relation to our beliefs. They provide emotional outlets, and the opportunity to break out of the regular everyday 'mould' of self.

Pagan Festivals fit around the 'Wheel of the Year', which as its name suggests, centres on the seasons. The cycle of Nature is at the core of how we relate to the Universe, and our concern for the planet is at the centre of everything that we try to do and to commit to.

There are major festivals in each season. Winter Solstice and Summer Solstice mark the longest night and the longest day of the year respectively. Exactly between these fall the Spring and Autumn Equinoxes. These are the days when the hours of daylight and darkness are equal in length. If we concern ourselves with the care of the planet, these are key points when the year 'turns', moving from one phase to another. The Winter Solstice, for instance, is marked by the shortest and darkest day of the year, but we know that from there on the days begin to lengthen and brighten again. Even the darkness brings the promise of light.

Between these are four more 'quarter day' festivals, Beltane (May Eve), Lammastide (or Lughnasadh), Samhain (Hallowe'en, All Saints/All Hallows Eve) and Imbolc (Candlemas). Each of these has a particular character or significance. If you were brought up in orthodox Christianity you may recognise each of these dates as belonging to a particular saint. This is because when early Christianity overwhelmed Britain, the features of those special days were acquired by the church, and Saints who often embodied similar characteristics were assigned to them. In this way, the local populations were persuaded that there was little change in reality from their long-held beliefs, and that their ancient beliefs could continue. The Virgin Mary stood as a supplicant between gods and humans, and people substituted her for the Goddess, who had always been there for them.

The Pagan festival of Imbolc, known to Christians as Candlemas, is of particular significance. In the Christian calendar this is dedicated to Saint Brigit, but in the Pagan calendar this is dedicated to the much older Bride (also known as Brigit or Brighid), the triple Goddess. In many ways this festival echoes others in other cultures, where the Goddess who brings plenty and fertility to the land wakes from her sleep or returns from the underworld. Wherever she walks, green shoots emerge. The early Christians lived mostly close to the land that fed them, and therefore kept very close to ancient Pagan origins, in this significant festival.

You may however live in a part of the world where February 1st is far from the beginning of spring. When you keep a festival, it is important to recognise and revere the actual condition (and needs) of the land as it appears where you live.

Since the Celtic year was based on both lunar and solar cycles, this festival was celebrated on the full moon nearest the midpoint between the winter solstice and vernal equinox. Modern pagans usually celebrate Imbolc on 1st February in the Northern Hemisphere and 1st August in the Southern Hemisphere. This need not be exact.

Brigid is said to walk the earth on Imbolc Eve. Before going to bed, individuals may leave an item of clothing or strip of cloth outside for the goddess to bless. The fire should be smothered and the ashes raked smooth. These are checked in the morning for signs of the

Goddess' passing, and the clothes or strips of cloth are brought inside and kept as blessings, believed to now have powers of healing and protection

Corn dollies are also made in some places at this time. These are kept and may be the subject of a gathering.

The sabbat of Beltane is celebrated on the first of May, but Beltane Eve also important. Beltane is a fire festival, linked to concepts of new growth and fertility. Bonfires traditionally made from rowan and hawthorn or whitethorn (May Flower) are lit the night before to celebrate and to provide focus for the festivities.

Beltane celebrations were often a time of sexual license, and children were often conceived on Beltane or Beltane Eve, as communities were released temporarily from everyday moral strictures.

In some parts of Britain, bonfires are still lit to celebrate, and some traditions allow one or more participants to leap over the fire. Oatmeal cakes are traditional at these gatherings, and many will refer to these as 'moon cakes', remembering the Goddess in her aspect as the moon, because although the Wheel of the Year revolves around the progress of the sun, the duality is also important.

Beltane marks the mid-point between Ostara (the spring equinox, Christianised as Easter) and precedes the Midsummer Solstice. The astronomical date for this midpoint is nearer to 5th 6th or 7th May, and can vary from year to year, but Modern Pagans keep mostly to May 1st. In Ireland "Old Beltane" or "Old May" began on the night of May 11th and continued through to May 12th. Bealltainn in Scotland was commonly celebrated on 15 May, but Beltane in Edinburgh is a huge festival, and includes contributions from the arts community. Spring arrives later as we travel north, and in earlier societies, less bound by calendars and more bound to the land and the seasons, celebrations of spring often fall later.

Midsummer Solstice (Litha) marks the longest day of the year and therefore the shortest night. For communities who rely heavily upon crops and animal husbandry to survive, this high point provides an essential pivot to the year, and to the tasks that must be completed or aimed for by that date. From here, a rural community turns its thoughts towards harvest, and the safe 'gathering in' of crops to provide food for the coming winter. The knowledge that each day from here on brings fractionally less sunlight focuses the mind wonderfully.

The festival of Lammas, also called Lughnasadh, celebrates the 'first fruits' - first harvest and the reaping of grain. It is a cross-quarter holiday halfway between the Summer Solstice and the Autumnal Equinox. In the Northern Hemisphere, Lammas takes place around August 1 when the Sun is near the midpoint of Leo in the tropical zodiac, while in the Southern Hemisphere Lammas is celebrated around February 1 when the Sun is near the midpoint of Aquarius. In many parts of England, tenants were bound to present freshly harvested wheat to their landlords on or before the first day of August.

In Anglo-Saxon England on this day it was customary to bring to church a loaf made from the new crop. The loaf was blessed, and it might be employed afterwards to work magic. One book of Anglo-Saxon charms asked that the Lammas bread should be broken into four bits, and placed at the four corners of the barn, to protect the garnered grain.

The Christian 'harvest festival' allows parishioners in both town and country to remember this practice, and to bring food to the church, for later distribution to the needy, and to give thanks for the year and its goodness.

The element of sacrifice is therefore also associated with Lammas, because of its close associations with the idea of 'giving something back', in order to maintain protection of the land. Magic concerned with the idea of sacrifice in any way is often held back until this festival if possible, so as to increase its power. In certain ancient traditions the figure representing the Green Man would end his reign at this time of the year.

The pagan connections of the English Royal Family in earlier times are often hinted at. On 2nd August 1100, King William Rufus (second son of William 'the Conqueror', a known senior Pagan) went hunting in the New Forest. During the hunt, another man in the hunting party fired an arrow at a stag, which missed its mark and hit William Rufus in the chest. Within a few minutes the king was dead. It is not possible to know at this distance of time if the King actually sacrificed himself for the land, but the associations are powerful.

Modern Pagans do *not* adhere to the idea of physical self-sacrifice, and should never be asked or persuaded to such a possibility. Anyone who follows such a practice is regarded as betraying the main life-affirming premises that we try to live by today. The offerings of food to the needy and support for the planet are today's acceptable Paganism.

The Autumn Equinox is also known as Mabon is celebrated in the northern hemisphere on or around September 23rd. This is a quarter day, falling between the two solstices, and of particular significance in agricultural communities. Again the ideas of gathering in (the harvest) and being thankful and paying back are foremost. Again there are some associations with the concept of sacrifice.

For both of these festivals, the idea of sacrifice grows from the recognition of a need to say Thank You to the earth. When people were self-sufficient, they looked ahead at this time to the dark days of winter, and always hoped that the efforts of the year would have produced enough for storage and preservation, to see them (and their animals) through to easier times. Every item was vital. So to give some of that produce back to the land, in a symbolic way, perhaps also to benefit the needy, was a powerful statement of faith, that the gods would protect us through the difficult times ahead.

Yuletide begins at the Winter Solstice, which is the shortest day and falls on December 21st in the northern hemisphere, and June 21st in the southern hemisphere. Solstice Eve is a significant time for many modern Pagans, when they review themselves and the year just passed, and decide upon a personal wish. The thirteen days which follow (counting Solstice as number one) are in many ways a 'time out from time', when feasting is allowed, celebrating the knowledge that from here the days begin to lengthen, and that life will re-awaken within the land again. Gifts are exchanged at this time (and donations made to the needy) in recognition of this in traditions all over the world and through history.

Many Pagans feel that this is an important time to keep the focus on what is necessary and what needs to be changed. The concept of a wish is important, but it is often difficult to find exactly the right words to frame this. It is always important to spend some time in meditation, to discover the proper wording of a wish, and even then, as the days of Yuletide pass, this may become more refined.

When Yuletide ends, on January 3rd, the answer to your wish will become evident. There is always the possibility that the answer will be no, and the result may certainly be temporary, or not quite as you hoped, because the words are important and will be answered quite literally. But without doubt, changes will be visible by that time, unless the wish has been cruelly, selfishly or unrealistically framed. The gods that govern this time of year and are listening closely to us are generous beings who wish to encourage us to celebrate life and each other, and who will deal harshly with anyone who tries to use the gift of this festival in a way that damages others.

Together these are the Sabbats, or major festivals, key dates which matter because they mark times of Balance or turning within the natural calendar. They are considered to be the best times to petition the gods for their help, and also to practise magic, divination and healing.

By actively participating in these natural cycles today, we can attune ourselves to the creative forces that flow through us, and learn how to live in harmony and balance with ourselves and with the Earth. Many witches come together to celebrate at these times, but it is

also fine to celebrate alone. Ritual traditionally includes making a sacred circle, meditating together, thanking and asking in a form of ritual acceptable to the coven. Every Full Moon is also a time for celebration, and a traditional time to meet and spend time together. There are thirteen of these every year, and they are known as Esbats.

They are times of power.

## 10 Health

The traditional image of a witch has always been a very old, but very intelligent woman. This stereotype has certain roots, - although of course not all Pagans are witches. Certainly most were (and still are) healers in some way. Certainly a knowledge of plants, herbs and health-related items was usual. They used natural herbs as medicine and connected to people with energy, fighting disease and depression within their communities. (Today we may use reiki and botanical medicine.) And many *did* live longer than average lives, unless angry authorities cut their lives short, largely because they were inclined to use their knowledge to gain personal health and longevity.

Many aspects of the Craft deal with health and healing. The traditional Pagan has always been a healer, and many today see this as an important part of their practice. Any individual who becomes more and more interested in caring for others and for the planet, the idea of healing becomes increasingly attractive at every level.

But before anyone can think about developing their healing talents, it is important to give some thought to the nature of health. Begin with your own health. Take some time to consider what health means to you. Note anything about yourself that you automatically phrase in negative terms. Make a list of these, and put this aside for a while.

Now a few words of advice. Whenever you decide to practice your new or developing skills, you will find that certain things interfere with the process, some of which I have listed below.

Serious practitioners will often refuse anything but water to drink during any kind of magical or ritual practice, and magic certainly does seem to make us thirsty. Give in to that, and take more water. Many of us find an increased desire for fresh water to drink, and may also take this as herbal tea.

All other teas, coffee and soft drinks contain caffeine, which can interfere with the clarity that the mind needs. - Of course, the idea of reducing your caffeine intake may fill you with horror! But in fact, this response really only indicates that you already have a caffeine addiction. You might want to address that before moving on, since it will interfere with your capacity for effective healing or magic, and the meditation skills that underpin so much of what we do.

All diet drinks, sweeteners and produced diet foods (that is, not fresh vegetables, etc.) contain aspartame, which is seriously damaging stuff, and we are all taking in more of that than we realise.

Margarine is another item that you might want to lose. It contains the same calories as butter, but none of the nutrition, and was originally developed to feed turkeys, but had bad effects upon them. Margarine is one molecule away from being plastic. If you are concerned about your weight and your health, you might want to change to butter, but use less.

Monosodium glutamate is an addictive chemical, found in excessive quantities in many fast foods and take-aways. Monosodium glutamate poisoning is a recognised problem, which may put you in hospital. This is also found in jars of 'cook-in' sauces.

Alcohol and drugs of any kind are seriously damaging to clear-sight, and to the focus needed for magical work. Some ancient cultures relied upon drugs to enhance their natural practices, but of course there is a physical, emotional and psychic price to be paid for this. Many modern Pagans avoid these as much as possible, since they prefer the experience to be real, intense and also reproducible - which experiences 'under the influence' may not be.

Please note; anyone who claims to be a teacher, but who encourages you to use any of the above substances, in order to practice, is *not* helping, and may have a personal agenda for leading you into a damaging place. They should be mistrusted and avoided.



As you progress within the Craft, you will find yourself more conscious of the artificial chemicals that many modern foods contain, and will want to decrease your intake. Eventually, you will find that you want to give up certain things, and should always listen to your body on this. Your personal health will improve automatically as a result, and as it does, your abilities will improve.

Exercise and meditation have already been mentioned in previous chapters, as bases for your Pagan practice. To make these part of your daily routine - especially early in the morning - will have massive positive effects upon both your personal health and your practice. We described chakras and their relationship with those glands which govern so much of the body's well-being.

As you work at developing your skills, your increased personal 'body awareness' will lead you to want more healthy and natural products, more fresh air, more healthy activity - and less of the things that damage us. This is a natural progression. Listen to your body's changing needs, and go with the flow.

Healing and the urge to become a healer are logical steps, as we progress within the Craft. We will examine these in the next chapter.

## 11 Healing

At the heart of many Pagan ways is the desire to make changes within the universe. In this approach we are asserting our human nature - if not always our humanity. The changes we aim to make should be positive, wherever possible, because any action will rebound upon us. The so-called 'triple law' is not actually an ancient precept, dating in fact only from the 1970s, but has its roots in a much older philosophy - the recognition of Balance, and the part that we play in that balance.

Old stories have always been told describing the consequences of any action, and warning against unnecessary interventions in the world. If we change something, something else will change to balance that. There will be personal consequences for us, too. If we cause rain to fall (even for the 'best' of reasons), we are taking it away from another place (which may also need it). The pursuit of youth and power, old stories warn us, is finally accompanied by a rapid decline into age and powerlessness, when the karmic pendulum swings back again. Cruel and selfish acts are a recipe for personal disaster.

Some events appear to be exceptions to this, but in fact are the principle of Balance on a much larger scale. It is possible, by a series of actions, to establish a cycle of events which gains its own impetus. This may be a positive cycle or a negative cycle. Easiest to establish are the negative cycles, in which one bad thing leads to another, and the original intent spirals out of control. Positive cycles are much harder to achieve, but are part of the Healing that we attempt. Both of these still carry personal consequences.

There are many among us who do not see healing as any real part of their role, within the universe. And yet, the impetus towards making positive changes, either globally or at an individual level, has a way of sneaking up on us. When we give ourselves to a particular god or goddess, we trigger a reaction from that Being. They acknowledge us by asking something in return.

Usually this response takes the form of a sense that we are loved, and listened to. (This is in turn encouraged by a daily dialogue with the deity, in which we tell them that we love them, and say Thank You for their presence in our lives.)

To feel cared for by a god/dess can be the beginning of the personal healing process, and there is no doubt that this is essential ground for any positives to take root and be nourished. None of us is entirely without emotional baggage; doubts, fears, conditioned responses and habitual roles.

Any religion worth its salt should make its follower feel nourished and supported, rather than guilty or undermined. People who change belief systems from one to another often describe the sense of belonging that the new religion brings as 'feeling like coming home'. This lets us know that we are on the right path *for us*. (Which may of course not be right for someone else.) As the old saying goes - 'there are many roads up the mountain'.

Two things follow. Personal confidence and internal peace are increased, and a sense grows upon us of what the god/dess wants of us in return for their love and support. The 'shape' of our daily meditation may begin to alter, as the words we find most appropriate become clearer. It is at this point that we begin to ask questions such as 'what can I do to help you today?' and 'what can I give to the universe today?' Even those questions may be too specific, and it is often a sound plan to simply say to the deity 'please, put me in the way of whatever you want me to help with today. Help me to recognise it when it happens. Give me the right words for the situation.'

When our meditations move in this direction, we begin to notice small new events in daily life, and we find an increasing sense that we are doing something that the god/dess wants us to do. Perhaps a smile and a few kind words to a lonely old lady. Perhaps something written

on a blog that will be read by someone who needs to hear those words. Sometimes we may simply be 'prompted' to speak or smile. We are often unaware of the consequences for others of these actions. But whatever it is, part of what we are doing is listening to the deity, and they tend to let us feel their approval.

Many years ago, a Pagan friend of mine described their increased ability to see coloured auras around passing individuals - even strangers on the street, following chakra work, which provides a very good grounding for what we do. She found that she understood the meaning of the colours that she saw, and their implications, even if those did not strictly adhere to the colours traditionally described in chakra work. Someone would pass her, and she knew something of their sadness or issues for a moment, because their aura was 'darker' or 'muddy'.

Detailed knowledge was not necessary. But she found that if she (silently) asked her personal goddess to bless that person 'their colours changed'. Often the stranger even smiled suddenly at her, before moving on, and never being seen again. Always she felt the approval of her goddess, as this happened.

This is in effect the basis of healing work. We focus on someone, and allow ourselves to see the colours within their aura. These are probably mixtures. One pure colour is a very unlikely event. Then we think of them changing colour, to something clearer, brighter, happier, calmer.

It is important to remember that we are not miracle workers, and that the 'magic wand' of fairy stories is an unrealistic expectation. Yet there is much that we can do, using only this simple technique. 'Cure' is difficult, but alleviation and increased peace (which helps the healing process) is more than possible. Bodies may be encouraged not to battle the treatments they are receiving, so that healing is increased. Emotions can be soothed, so that the individual can relax enough to benefit from talking therapies and begin to find a way to trust again.

What we do here is sometimes known as 'psychic healing', and of course does not need a physical presence to be used. If a body is capable of healing itself or the disease process can be arrested, it will appear to ease the problem. If the disease process has passed a certain point, it will still need further medical intervention, but should still be used to help that process along.

There is no conflict in marrying two types of healing. A friend of mine was in the Far East when his appendix burst, and found himself experiencing modern surgery which was combined with acupuncture for anaesthetic. Two approaches *can* be used together, and the real problems begin (and may become long-term) if only one approach is believed in, to the exclusion of all other possibilities.

Some illnesses and diseases will not be able to be resolved by psychic healing alone, but the sense of calm and clarity that it can bring does allow for improved decision-making, and usually improved mood and optimism. This is extremely important. While healing is not always possible, the reverse (that someone can become more ill and even die of a down-turn in mood) is very possible. This is known among health professionals as the patient 'turning their face to the wall', and effectively losing the will to battle their illness, or even the will to live.

Psychic healing is also very useful to help worried relatives, whose fears and anxieties are often communicated to the patient, and may drain the patient of the energy they need to fight their illness.

It is not necessary to set up a 'clinic' to help the healing process along. Within daily meditation, a space can always be found to envisage the person and to visualise them improving, with decreased distress, pain and symptoms. We focus up seeing them as calmer, and more receptive to all the factors that are helping them to fight the problem.

Finally, it is important to remember that a time comes for everyone to die. To return to the messages hidden in the traditional old stories, there are many warnings against trying to keep someone in this world beyond their allotted time. Death comes, and it is as natural as birth - but need not be a thing of terror. Within your practice, you should ask very careful questions and make careful requests. Most health professionals are aware of a time when an individual passes a certain point, and the dying process (which usually takes a few days) begins. At this point, the aim is a 'peaceful and dignified death', and peace of mind colours are those that we must emphasise.

Death is difficult to deal with. If the person who is leaving this earth is someone you care about personally, you will struggle to keep your own emotions from interfering with your meditations, and should always preface your work by a little work on your own emotions, so that you can better help others.

There are those amongst us who do not believe that they have the potential to be healers. However, that belief is usually the result of unrealistic expectations, and personal uncertainties. Everyone in fact has the potential, using chakra work and meditation, to ask the deity to help someone in need. The results may surprise you.

## 12 Healing Plants and Herbs

What should we expect from the plants and herbs that we use? While many of these have immense healing qualities, magic itself is less easily produced. So, if magic is your goal, simple herbs are unlikely to be enough. Yet there is much that we can learn from using them, both for ourselves and for others, to support the other work that we do.

Traditionally, Pagans study hard to understand the healing properties of herbs and plants. This is something that we can spend lifetimes examining, and it would not be possible to list every ailment and every food or herb here in one chapter. But over the next few pages I have listed some of these (in alphabetical order) so that you can gain some basic knowledge. Hopefully these will inspire you to look further. If this approach is of interest to you, there are many sources to go to, to learn in more depth.

Dis-ease is however by its nature multi-factorial. There is never any one item or factor that 'cures' a problem, but there are always many that can help to combat what is happening, within a mind or body. Prevention is better than cure, and many plants and herbs are useful in keeping dis-ease at bay in the first place. Cure is always more difficult to achieve.

The following plants and herbs are good additions to anybody's regular diet, for a number of reasons, but should never be taken as the entire and absolute picture. Someone who is on medication where certain foods are contra-indicated should never confuse the issue by indulging in those foods, as confusion of that kind can only lead to new - perhaps more intransigent - problems.

Someone suffering from diabetes, for instance, must always be aware of the amount of natural sugars that they might be ingesting. Someone on anti-coagulant (Warfarin) therapy should not take green-leaf foods such as kale and broccoli, or chickpeas (found in humus) or cranberries, and although these are all 'super-foods' in their own right, anti-coagulant therapy is necessary to life for some, and should never be compromised.

There are no magic wands in the study of plants and herbs, although of course there are many very useful additions to the diet. It would be wrong to suggest for instance that cancer can be cured by diet, - but there is some evidence that it may be held at bay by increasing anti-oxidants. You may strongly dislike certain foods that are recommended, but do not despair. There are ways around this.

How best to incorporate herbs and so on into cooking, so that benefits are acquired? Home-made soup is best made by boiling potatoes with other ingredients such as celery, apple, onion, herbs and carrot. Then add in a taste of whatever else you might not like, such as beetroot, raw liver, marmite, particular herbs etc., which are good for your needs at this time.

Their flavour will not be detected, but they will enhance other flavours, and give necessary bonuses to the diet. Stir in a stock cube of choice. Liquidise, heat and serve with a slice of crusty wholemeal bread for a very filling and healthy meal.

Salads are more than a piece of lettuce and a tomato. Cottage cheese with the addition of sweetcorn, chopped ham, pepper, mushroom, mandarin, apple, raisins and/or grapes provides a superb accompaniment to any meal.

Some herbs have powerful traditions attached to them. For instance, Ginseng is used as a preventative for most conditions, but one must carefully gather ginseng roots. Always pass by the first 3 plants that you find, and only start to harvest on the 4th plant, after a prayer of thanks, and leaving an offering in that roots place.

Of course there are many plants and herbs that have poisonous or hallucinogenic properties. These are not dealt with here, as they are the cruel uses that gave Pagans a bad name, in times past, and should never be used by anyone who has any thought for their own karma. Remember, to harm someone is to bind yourself to that person for many lifetimes - and the consequences within that are immeasurable.

The most usual way to use many herbs medicinally is to make an infusion. The standard way to make an infusion is to pour a cup of boiling water over the required materials, let it stand for five minutes. This is one quarter cup of fresh material to one cup of water, and two teaspoons of dried material, seeds or bark to one cup of water. Then strain and drink. You may find this very bitter, and could flavour your drink with honey with a splash of lemon juice.

Important notes; -

Only use herbal material if you are *absolutely* sure that it is the herb in question.

Do not continuously drink the same infusion. Only use an infusion for a maximum of ten days - and do not exceed the doses. Then rest for five days.

Only have one cup of the infusion per day. More may be toxic.

Infusions may be extremely powerful. If you have any side-effects or health concerns, stop taking immediately, and consult your health practitioner at once.

No herb should be taken randomly, in the hope that it will 'help everything'. Many have powerful side effects. For instance, anyone who is pregnant or has stomach or intestinal ulcers should avoid cinnamon. And as for the rest - too much of anything is never a good thing.

Chillis in excess can damage mucous membranes of mouth, throat and digestive system. People with sensitive skin should wear gloves when handling chillies.

Coriander can produce an allergic reaction in some people.

Nutmeg is another good example of the need for caution. As few as two nutmegs can poison, and so should always be used sparingly.

The rest of this chapter is divided into two sections; reference by herb or plant and reference by ailment. Because these are very basic lists, **BEFORE YOU DECIDE TO USE ANY HERB OR PLANT, READ FURTHER AROUND IT FROM MORE DETAILED SOURCES, TO MAKE SURE THAT IT IS NOT CONTRA-INDICATED IN ANY OTHER AILMENT THAT YOU ARE SUFFERING FROM.** For instance, do not eat kale, broccoli, chickpeas (found in hummus) or cranberries whilst on anti-coagulant therapy (warfarin).

### 13 Reference by herb or plant;

Aloe Vera; inflammation

Aniseed; digestion, indigestion, flatulence, breath sweetener

Anti-oxidants (help to fight heart disease); goji berries, blackberries, other dark fruit, citrus fruit, vegetables, basil, wasabi. These contain vitamins A, C, D and E, co-enzyme Q<sub>10</sub>, selenium, manganese, copper, zinc, iron, zinc, lycopene, chromium and betacarotene.

Apples; asthma. Contain vitamin C

Asfoetida; digestion, flatulence

Avocado; asthma

B6 (vitamin); wasabi

Bananas; helps lower blood pressure and improve heart function, atherosclerosis, reduced risk of stroke, asthma, contains potassium

Basil; strong antioxidant, antimicrobial. Stimulates the appetite, eases stomach upset. Supports kidney function, eases gum ulcers, earaches, itching, malaria, arthritis, anorexia.

Bay laurel; stimulant for the skin *but may cause reddening in sensitive individuals.*

Broccoli sprouts; asthma; *do not eat broccoli whilst on anti-coagulant therapy (warfarin)*

Bran; laxative, digestion

Cabbage; large outer leaves may be used to support the sore breasts of nursing mothers.

Camomile; insomnia, anxiety. **MAY CAUSE ALLERGIC REACTIONS AND EVEN DEATH.** *Chamomile has not been found to be useful in reducing the side effects of cancer treatment.*

Caraway seeds; thought to inhibit fickleness. any object containing caraway could not be stolen. Antiseptic, antispasmodic, carminative, and digestive. Has been used to stimulate milk production in mothers as well as treat infant colic

Cardamom; digestion, breath sweetener. helping the liver, the appetite, stomach, intestines. The common cold, coughs, bronchitis, fevers, inflammation of the mouth and pharynx, gallbladder complaints, loss of appetite, urinary tract problems. and to improve the ability of the immune system to counter infection. Buy cardamom seeds still sealed in their pods for best flavour and effect. Unlike cinnamon, it is safe for use during pregnancy and a nice way to calm morning sickness.

Catnip tea; jaundice

Cayenne (*capsicum frutescens*); Appetizer, antiseptic, fever, antibacterial, carminative, diaphoretic, rubefacient, nerve tonic, digestive, sialagogue (stimulates secretion of saliva), stimulant, and tonic (cayenne is usually mixed with other herbs in medicinal doses)

Celery seeds; flatulence, indigestion, asthma, bronchitis

Chillies; colds, nasal congestion, apathy, mild depression, help salivation and digestion, stimulate sweat glands, lower fevers. *Cautions; overdose can damage mucous membranes of mouth, throat and digestive system. People with sensitive skin should wear gloves when handling chillies.*

Cinnamon; digestion, antiseptic, tonic, colds, circulation, appetite enhancer, carminative, antispasmodic, anti-rheumatic, anti-fungal, menstrual cramps, sore joints, acid reflux, childhood diarrhoea and infestations of worms. Halitosis, toothache, nausea, and vomiting. Spiritual energy.

Cloves; toothache, analgesic, antiseptic, nausea, digestion, intestinal parasites, to stimulate uterine contractions, arthritis, inflammation, migraine headaches, colds, allergies, cramp, flatulence, colic, malaria, tuberculosis, scabies, memory improvement

Coriander (leaves); stimulant, tonic, flatulence, increase secretion and discharge of urine and reduce fever, anxiety, (Experiments in mice support its use as an anxiolytic), insomnia,

diuretic, carminative and for general digestion, (as juice) acne. NOTE; CORIANDER CAN PRODUCE AN ALLERGIC RESPONSE IN SOME PEOPLE

Cranberries; cystitis

Cubebs; carminative, cystitis, bronchitis

Cumin; antispasmodic, flatulence, (poultice) to relieve pain

Dandelion leaves; diuretic

Dill; stomach upset and gastrointestinal disorders, sleep disorders (particularly insomnia), infant colic (as a mild infusion).

Fennel; digestion, sedative, bronchial problems, eyewash

Fenugreek; digestion

Figs; laxative

Garlic; coughs, fevers, or applied externally to prevent the greying of hair, eczema, scabies, earache and deafness, sinus problems. regulates menstruation, forgetfulness, tremor, internal ulcers, fevers, whooping cough in children, intestinal worms, to settle the stomach, diabetes, rheumatism, colic, flatulence, dysentery, liver disorders, facial paralysis, high blood pressure and bronchitis, antibacterial, antimycotic, and lipid-lowering, de-tox, arteriosclerosis, gastrointestinal ailments, stimulating effect on the sexual glands, (as a poultice over the throat) for goitre, regulating liver and gallbladder, intestinal infections, parasite infestations, problems due to putrefactive intestinal bacteria.

Ginger; asthma, muscle pain, exhaustion, depression, lethargy, aphrodisiac

Ginseng; general health

Goji berries, anti-oxidants, cancer

Iron; liver

Juniper berries; diuretic, flatulence, indigestion

Kale; asthma. AVOID IF YOU ARE ON ANTI-COAGULANT THERAPY

Lavender; Pain, loss of appetite, insomnia, circulatory disorders, migraine, cramps, restlessness

Lemon grass; fever, stomach cramps, flatulence, colic, arthritic pain, digestion

Lentils; constipation

Lettuce; insomnia

Liquorice; bronchial problems, coughs, sore throat, laxative

Liver (to eat); iron, vitamin A

Mustard; asthma

Nigella; detoxification, liver stimulant, hepatitis, helps the complexion

Nutmeg; diarrhoea and gastrointestinal. Flatulence, vomiting, anti-rheumatic, worms, headaches, insomnia, fever, malaria, impotence, carminative, rheumatism, sciatica, and neuralgia, safe travel, spiritual energy. POISONOUS IF USED IN EXCESS.

Oregano; respiratory issues, coughs menstrual cramp, antimicrobial, antiseptic

Parsley; urinary tract infections, kidney and bladder stones, gastrointestinal, stimulate menstruation.

Pepper (piper nigrum, black peppercorns); carminative, fever, digestion, flatulence.

CAUTION; MAY CAUSE CONGESTION OF THE BLOOD, AND SHOULD BE AVOIDED BY SUFFERERS FROM HAEMORRHOIDS OR VARICOSE VEINS

Peppermint; colic and digestive upset, colds, blocked sinuses, sore throat, headaches and migraines, liver and gallbladder complaints.

Plums; constipation

Poppy seeds; sedative, eyewash

Prunes; constipation

Quinine; cramp, malaria

Raspberry leaf; menstrual problems, pregnancy

Rosemary; asthma, digestive upset, headaches and migraines, menstrual disorders, (externally) to speed healing in wounds and to treat eczema, diuretic, antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, diuretic, blood pressure problems, rheumatism.

Saffron; digestion, salivation, stimulates sweat glands

Sage; appetite, inflammation (particularly of the mouth). For nursing mothers sage can help to slow milk production.

Sesame seeds; rich in vitamins and minerals *but very high in calories*

Spinach; asthma

Star anise; carminative, stimulant, diuretic. rheumatism, stomach ailments, bronchitis, expectorant, anti-spasmodic, anti-microbial, improves memory, oily skin, coughs, increases milk production for nursing mothers, aphrodisiac, colic, nausea, flatulence, breath freshener, hiccups, for promoting milk production for nursing mothers, water retention, headache, asthma, bronchitis, insomnia, nausea, lice, infant colic

Sunflower oil; ('good') polyunsaturated fats

Sunflower seeds; asthma

Sweet potatoes; asthma

Szechuan pepper; antispasmodic, carminative, indigestion, fever, blood circulation, lethargy

Tamarind; digestion, laxative, astringent, fever, natural antiseptic

Tarragon; toothaches, upset stomachs, and to induce menstruation.

Thyme; asthma, coughs, gastro-intestinal disorders

Turmeric; asthma, cancer, antiseptic. Some say Turmeric helps to prevent (not cure) types of cancer. Anti-inflammatory, arthritis, rheumatism, muscle sprains, swelling, pain caused by injuries or surgical incisions, liver diseases, stimulates the gallbladder and circulatory systems, reduces cholesterol levels, relieves painful menstruation and angina, digestive problems, irritable bowel syndrome, colitis, Crohn's disease, and illnesses caused by toxins from parasites and bacteria.

Wasabi; contains protein, fibre, vitamins B6 and C, and the minerals calcium, magnesium, potassium and manganese. Seasonal allergies and asthma, longevity, anti-Inflammatory, antioxidants, arthritis, IBS, Crohn's disease, food poisoning, dental carries, gingivitis inhibit platelet aggregation (blood clotting), anti-Microbial



## 14 Reference by Need or Ailment

Acid reflux; cinnamon  
Acne; coriander (mix into a paste with mint and turmeric)  
Allergies; cloves, wasabi  
Analgesic; cloves  
Angina; turmeric  
Anorexia; basil  
Anti-bacterial; garlic  
Anti-biotic; cayenne  
Anti-fungal; cinnamon  
Anti-inflammatory; rosemary, turmeric, wasabi  
Anti-microbial; basil, oregano, star anise  
Anti-mycotic; garlic  
Anti-oxidants (help to fight heart disease); goji berries, blackberries, other dark fruit, citrus fruit, vegetables, basil, wasabi. These contain vitamins A,C, D and E, co-enzyme Q10, selenium, manganese, copper, zinc, iron, zinc, lycopene, chromium and betacarotene.  
Anti-rheumatic; cinnamon, nutmeg, turmeric  
Antiseptic; dock leaves, cinnamon, turmeric, tamarind, caraway seeds, cloves, oregano, cayenne, rosemary  
Antispasmodic; cumin, szechuan pepper, caraway seeds, cinnamon, star anise  
Anxiety; coriander, camomile  
Aphrodisiac; star anise  
Appetite stimulant; basil, cardamom, cayenne, cinnamon, lavender, sage  
Apathy; chillies (South American native tradition mixes these with chocolate)  
Arteriosclerosis; garlic, bananas  
Arthritis; cloves, basil, lemon grass, turmeric, wasabi  
Asthma; avocado, apples, broccoli sprouts, bananas, ginger, spinach, rosemary, sunflower seeds, sweet potatoes, kale, turmeric, mustard, celery (especially the seeds), thyme, wasabi  
Astringent; tamarind  
Atherosclerosis; bananas, garlic  
B6 (vitamin); wasabi  
Betacarotene; carrots, apricots, melon, spinach, cabbage, broccoli, brussels sprouts  
Blocked sinuses; peppermint  
Blood circulation; szechuan pepper  
Blood clotting; wasabi (DO NOT USE WHILE ON ANTI-COAGULANT THERAPY)  
Blood pressure; rosemary  
Breath sweetener; cardamom, aniseed, star anise  
Bronchial problems; fennel, liquorice, cubebs, celery seeds, garlic, cardamom, star anise  
Cancer (prevention); turmeric, goji berries, fruit (see anti-oxidants), ginger  
Carminatives; cubebs, pepper, caraway seeds, coriander, cayenne, cinnamon, nutmeg, star anise  
Cell regeneration (healthy); celery, asparagus, kale, parsley, turnip, chard  
Cholesterol (to lower); turmeric  
Circulation; cinnamon, lavender, turmeric  
Colds; chillies, fennel, cloves, cardamom, cinnamon, peppermints  
Colic; cloves, garlic, lemon grass, peppermint, star anise  
Colitis; turmeric  
Complexion; nigella (see also skin toning)

Constipation; prunes, figs, plums, lentils  
 Coughs; liquorice, garlic, cardamom, oregano, star anise, thyme  
 Cramps; cloves, quinine, lavender  
 Crohn's disease; turmeric, wasabi  
 Cubebs; carminative, cystitis, bronchitis  
 Cumin; antispasmodic, flatulence, (poultice) to relieve pain  
 Cystitis; cubebs, cranberries  
 Deafness; garlic  
 Dental caries; wasabi  
 Depression; chillies, ginger  
 Detoxification; nigella, garlic  
 Diabetes (not a cure - aids regulation); garlic  
 Diaphoretic; cayenne  
 Diarrhoea (children); cinnamon, (adult) nutmeg  
 Digestion; chillies, cinnamon, saffron, cardamom, asfoetida, fennel, aniseed, pepper, lemon  
 grass, coriander, fenugreek, bran, caraway seeds, cloves, cayenne, rosemary, star anise,  
 turmeric  
 Diuretic; juniper berries, dandelion leaves, pepper, coriander, rosemary, star anise  
 Dysentery; garlic  
 Earache; basil, garlic  
 Eczema; garlic (mild paste; always patch test first), rosemary  
 Exhaustion; ginger  
 Expectorant; star anise  
 Facial paralysis; garlic (better as a preventative than cure)  
 Fennel; digestion, sedative, bronchial problems, eyewash  
 Fever; chillies, tamarind, szechuan pepper, coriander, garlic, cardamom, cayenne, lemon  
 grass, nutmeg  
 Figs; laxative  
 Flatulence; cumin, asfoetida, juniper berries, aniseed, pepper, celery seeds, cloves,  
 coriander, garlic, lemon grass, nutmeg, star anise  
 Forgetfulness; garlic, cloves, rosemary  
 Gallbladder regulation; garlic, cardamom, turmeric  
 Gastrointestinal; garlic, nutmeg, parsley, thyme  
 General health; sage, ginseng, slippery elm bark  
 Ginger; asthma, muscle pain, exhaustion, depression, lethargy, aphrodisiac  
 Gingivitis; wasabi  
 Gluten free; fresh meat, poultry without stuffing or breadcrumbs, fruit, eggs, nuts, gelatine,  
 agar agar, seeds, anchovies in oil, smoked mackerel, dairy (not processed), honey, molasses  
 Goitre; garlic (as a poultice on the throat)  
 Greying hair; garlic paste applied externally  
 Gum/mouth ulcers; basil  
 Hallitosis; cinnamon  
 Headaches; nutmeg, peppermint, rosemary, star anise  
 Heart function; bananas  
 Hepatitis; nigella  
 Hiccups; star anise  
 High blood pressure; garlic, bananas  
 Impotence; nutmeg  
 Indigestion/stomach upset; juniper berries, aniseed, szechuan pepper, celery seeds, basil,  
 dill, garlic

Infant colic; caraway seeds, dill (as a mild infusion)  
 Inflammation; cloves, aloe vera  
 Insomnia; camomile, lettuce, poppy seeds, coriander, dill, lavender, nutmeg  
 Internal ulcers; garlic; AVOID CINNAMON AND CHILLIS  
 Intestinal infections; garlic  
 Intestinal parasites; cloves  
 Intestinal worms; garlic  
 Intestines; cardamom  
 Iron; liver  
 Irritable bowel syndrome; turmeric, wasabi  
 Itching; basil  
 Jaundice; Catnip tea  
 Joint pains; cinnamon  
 Kidney function; basil, parsley  
 Kidney and bladder stones; parsley  
 Laxative; tamarind, figs, prunes, liquorice, bran, fruit  
 Lethargy; szechuan pepper, pepper, nigella, mustard, ginger  
 Lipid (re-cholesterol) lowering; garlic  
 Liquorice; bronchial problems, coughs, sore throat, laxative  
 Liver (to cleanse); cardamom, peppermint  
 Liver; nigella (stimulant), garlic (for regulation), turmeric  
 Longevity; wasabi  
 Malaria; cloves, quinine, basil, nutmeg  
 Memory; cloves, rosemary, garlic, star anise  
 Menstrual problems; raspberry leaf tea, garlic, (cramps) cinnamon, turmeric, oregano, rosemary  
 Menstruation (to stimulate); parsley, tarragon  
 Migraine; cloves, lavender, peppermint, rosemary  
 Milk production in nursing mothers; (to encourage) caraway seeds, (to slow) sage, star anise  
 Morning sickness; cardamom  
 Mouth (inflammation); cardamom  
 Muscle pain; ginger, turmeric  
 Nasal congestion; chillies  
 Nausea; cloves, cinnamon, star anise  
 Nerve tonic; cayenne  
 Neuralgia; nutmeg  
 Oily skin; star anise  
 Oregano; respiratory issues, coughs menstrual cramp, antimicrobial, antiseptic  
 Pain; cumin (as a poultice), lavender (drops), turmeric  
 Pharynx (inflammation); cardamom  
 Pregnancy; Raspberry leaf tea  
 Protein; cheese, milk, pulses, soya, nuts, tofu, cereals, meat, fish  
 Respiratory; oregano  
 Restlessness; lavender  
 Rheumatism; garlic, nutmeg, rosemary, star anise, turmeric  
 Rubefacient; cayenne  
 Safe travel; nutmeg  
 Saffron; digestion, salivation, stimulates sweat glands

Sage; appetite, inflammation (particularly of the mouth). For nursing mothers sage can help to slow milk production.

Salivation; saffron, chillies

Scabies; cloves, garlic

Sciatica; nutmeg (oil applied externally)

Sedative; fennel, poppy seeds, camomile

Sexual gland stimulation; garlic

Sialagogue (stimulates secretion of saliva); cayenne

Skin tone; bay laurel - but may cause reddening or irritation in sensitive individuals; always patch test first.

Sinus problems; garlic

Sore throat; liquorice, peppermint

Spiritual energy; nutmeg

Stimulant; coriander, cayenne

Stomach cramps; lemon grass, tarragon

Stroke; (reduced risk) bananas

Sweat glands; saffron, chillies

Swelling; turmeric

Tonic; coriander, cayenne, cinnamon (not during pregnancy)

Toothache; cloves (or oil of cloves), tarragon

Tremor; garlic

Tuberculosis; cloves

Ulcers (internal); garlic

Urinary tract infections; cardamom, parsley

Urine secretion; coriander, basil (see also diuretic), parsley

Uterine contractions (to stimulate during labour); cloves

Vomiting; cinnamon, nutmeg

Water retention; star anise

Worms (infestation); cinnamon, nutmeg

Wound healing; rosemary

## 15 Ritual and Magic

Before proceeding any further in your studies, it is important to consider the role of ritual within your approach to magic, and the best place to begin is to examine what magic means to you.

Ritual is quite different from magic, but offers great reassurance and psychological support to many people. Rituals are the structures we use to help us along our personal Pathway. Groups use rituals to bind themselves together, in an act of sharing. We all have little personal rituals which help us to get through the day, and which may well offer times of respite within the busy day. This is an important part of life.

But is ritual necessary to the discovery of magic within the Universe? Not necessarily. It has its place, but it is easy to become dependent upon ritual, and to stop seeing the magic, because observing the ritual has become all-important.

Having a 'magical life' is not all about doing spells, scrying, full moon rituals or even herb lore. It's about living a particular philosophy every day. Pagans walk through nature, really seeing and connecting with all that is around. We notice trees, rocks, water, insects, and animals, as well as becoming conscious of elemental spirits and guardians of Place. You may have read of spells to summon these, but in fact they are there to be discovered, if we learn how to listen and look. Ritual may become a hindrance in this sphere. Some believe that it's complicated and hard to live a magical life and they must need the 'road map' of ritual to do it. But it's better just to incorporate the simplest of things into our busy lives. We aim to consciously work towards those things we want to manifest into the physical, and then being open enough to notice the signs that help direct us along that path.

Whenever we take time to whisper to the Moon (or deity) our hopes, secrets and thoughts, we are making a powerful beginning. If your idea in becoming a Pagan is to suddenly discover super-powers within yourself, so that you become a walking 'magic wand', you are going to be disappointed. True magic is in many ways 'natural science', which is why careful use of the plants and herbs previously described can play a large part. Care of the Planet becomes increasingly important to us, as we discover the sources of magic. The practice of Magic is also a question of Balance, and as you become successful in the skills you study, you must ALWAYS be aware that your actions will have consequences, and should not be used wantonly. There WILL be kick-back.

That you wish to influence the world around you is understandable - and only human. You will want to respond when someone hurts or angers or threatens you. You will want to shower blessings upon people and relationships that you see as positive. You may want something (a house or a job, for instance) and use your skills to obtain them. Whether these courses of action are wise, or even lasting, is another matter.

More of that later.

Choosing a Pagan Pathway is more than simply objecting to organised mainstream religion. You may be drawn to the Pagan Pathways, because you already feel a degree of natural talent within yourself, and if so, this area will provide the natural starting point for your studies. Many who follow Pagan ways have experienced telepathy, seen ghosts, or have verifiable past-life memories. Some find a natural affinity to healing practices. Some have experienced clairvoyance or precognition. Many feel the presence of a spirit guide who looks after them when needed, nudges and nags in certain directions, and who promptings are ignored at your peril.

It is very possible that you have developed a certain sequence of events - in effect a ritual - to help you to better experience these things. Personal rituals such as these, grown from

experience, are infinitely more powerful than any words found in a book, which worked for someone else, in some other time.

Take some time to consider yourself in this way. What are the unusual experiences or events that lead you to feel an affinity with Pagan approaches to spirituality? Some of these may well have occurred while you were still very young, and the adults in our young lives are usually quite disconcerted by any claims that children make. They do their best to 'socialise' children out of weird announcements or beliefs. So you may have learned early not to share too much of the 'unusual' with others, and may even have to dig a little deeper within your memory.

Other experiences may arrive later in life, when for instance we find that a route we would like to pursue in life is not open to us, despite logic. It may seem that certain doors remain closed, and even - if we pause to examine the situation - that we are being prompted to live, work or make allegiances elsewhere. When life does not proceed according to the rules of logic, it is legitimate to wonder what message the Universe is trying to give us. And we should listen. Because the Universe has a way sometimes of not letting us proceed in a direction, when it wants us to be somewhere else.

There are many variations on these themes. Quiet time spent examining the realities of your own personal inner life is time well spent. Pagan pathways very often take us to more introspective places, and allow for a greater sense of reality, rather than encouraging us to think grandiosely along the 'super hero' lines. So do not look for the amazing or fantastical, but try at all times to keep fantasy to a minimum. Constantly pare what you experience back to its basics, rather than to allow yourself to begin believing that magic is something that flies like sparks from your fingertips.

Magic is all around. It is in the wonder of the Universe, in the ordinary as well as in the amazing. Recognising magic in the Ordinary is the sign of a true Pagan. Believing only in the startling or wonderful is more a sign of the workings of the Ego, rather than attunement to the Universe.

More than seventy percent of Americans are said to believe in 'angels' or other support from Beyond. It is more than possible during this time of introspection that you will become more conscious of a sense that you have a spirit guide, or someone who looks after you. If this person appears to be a Native American, and you do not have Native American blood, or if they are a famous person from history, you may well be attributing characteristics to them that they do not really have. There seem to be a lot of these within the Spiritualist Church, a pathway which exists solely to confirm the existence of life after death, and which may or may not be a positive place for you as an individual. Certainly, becoming a Pagan is more than just believing in Spirits, and Spiritualism can come to feel quite limiting, within your quest for actual spirituality.

Most of those who have passed over and yet still manage to take care of us sometimes were once our relatives, and grandparents are quite usual. They are not the genie from Aladdin's fairy-tale bottle, and they do not have any particular powers of magic or precognition. But they can - and do - help. They often help as adjuncts to Conscience. They behave in a genuine way, which is recognisable as them, and which is part of the reassurance that their presence can offer. So if part of what draws you to the Pagan pathways is a sense that someone is still looking after you, listen to them, speak to them, and be prepared for them not to necessarily say what you want to hear.

A genuine spirit guide will sometimes feel neglected, and may move things around, just to remind you that they are there. Of course you can ask directly for their help, but it is only reasonable that they also appreciate being told that you care for them, rather than simply making demands which - if we listened to their guidance - might not even be the best way forward.

Listening to the 'still small voice' is paramount.

The question of ritual arises quickly when we establish a dialogue with a spirit guide. There may be a particular way, which can be incorporated in daily practice, by which we acknowledge our guides presence and influence, and say 'thank you' for it. This may be within meditation, or by use of a particular place or object. Objects are discussed in greater depth in the chapter on amulets. And it is essential that you recognise that after a certain amount of time - and especially if you become psychologically dependent on any amulet - it may simply disappear. A good spirit guide does not want you to become locked into practices that depend upon physical objects, and may remove them to remind you that your best resources come from within.

Some seekers look to the use of the cards (plain, tarot, and many variations) or the Ouija Board. While the use of the cards is legitimate, it should not be over-done. They are addictive, and may quickly cloud our ability to listen to our guides and to the Universe. Ouija Boards are notorious for being both unreliable and damaging to the good mental health that a true Pagan needs, and spends their life developing. They should be avoided.

Ritual often involve a sequence of words, and there are many books which list page after page of someone else's words, always making the claim that within these lies a magic key. Yet someone else's words are unlikely to be the ones that work for you. Again, it is easy to become locked into the words, and to lose the essential spirit of the exercise. Personally, I would look for a format from within myself, and use words that grow out of my own spiritual needs.

When we practice as Pagans within a group, there is likely to be a set format within that group, which allows us to act as a group. Care should be taken to avoid any elements within this which might detract from the process for some individuals. A good group will allow space within the ritual for each individual to silently meditate and to explore their own needs.

The concept of 'spells' is usually found alongside any discussion of Ritual. What is a spell? - Something that enhances a situation, or causes a change. But if we look at the traditional use of spells, these are quite visibly recipes for potions, accompanied by Ritual, which may help to alter our attitudes to a situation. When (in European witchcraft) the use of spells and potions was widely practiced, a psychological element was often also introduced, by letting the subject know that he or she was being 'over-looked', and what the desired result would be. This would work upon the mind very powerfully. Healing, love potions and cursing particularly benefitted in this way.

Today, if we make a spell and perform the ritual that goes with it, we are working in an entirely different world and culture. Yet by thoughtful and intense use of meditation and approach to the right deity, it is still possible to influence the Universe. Your own rituals will help you to find the best frame of mind, but are not solutions in themselves. The magic wand of fairy story never actually existed, but we can develop the skills to cause a change. It is important to know that this change will not be permanent, unless your work is a question of enhancing (or hurrying along) something that may have happened anyway. At that point, the most powerful thing that you can do is to discover the Right Question to ask of the Universe. Whoever is listening will take your requests very literally, and although the outcome may be exactly what you asked for, it will not necessarily bring the benefits you hoped for.

Examples are needed here.

Andrea, a witch of my acquaintance, learned that her husband had only a short time to live. She gave herself over to asking for his life to continue. He recovered, against all odds, but was no longer the man she had known. Within months he had become violent, and eventually left her for someone else. By that time she was glad to see him go. So despite her requests being answered, the personal result for her was that she still had no husband, and in fact she now had unhappy memories, which changed her feelings completely.

Marie badly wanted a particular job, and made her supplication 'Please let them offer me the job', which was answered positively. However, having been offered the job, she found that many other things changed in her life, so that she was unable to accept the offer. But she had been literally given what she asked for. Jack's experience was that he got the job that he asked for, but when he started, found himself in a terrible and impossible situation, - so bad that he had to leave after only a few months.

Remember that when we succeed in altering the balance of the world around us, we are also impinging upon the lives and karma of people we may never even meet. Their karma may be more powerful than our will, and eventually will overwhelm our request, without either of us ever knowing of the others' existence.

Others use their wills to help healing, and describe situations where healing works, but only partially. 'Let him live' is not a good request to make, since he may live - for years - but in pain or in a dependent, vegetative state. 'Ask Xxxx to make a spell for me' an old friend (with terminal cancer) said to me, quite recently, but I had to explain that I could not. I do not know if Xxxx has hidden issues about my friend, which might cloud what is asked for. And I know that I would not want my friend to be in extended pain and isolation. What then is the best way forward?

Best is to take ourselves into our special place (see next chapter Soul Journeying) and to spend time considering the real needs of the subject. Ask the Deity or your guardian for the best way forward. These may well not be what he or she is asking for. When we meet with our Deities or Guardians, it is best to ask 'Is there anything to be done here?' Some surprising answers emerge if we practise open-mindedness, and Listening. I received a remarkable answer to a friend's problem last year, and even having heard what to do, I was doubtful that it could happen. Yet it did. Knock on doors in the right frame of mind, and the right one will open.

Ritual and magic are therefore forever linked in the popular image of what we do, and all groups will practise them together to some degree. The solitary 'hedgewitch' has his or her own rituals, and learns how to live within the Universe, and to help it to grow and unfold as it wants to.



## 16 Soul Journeying

Soul Journeying is a technique most commonly associated with Shamanism, but which in fact is used in one way or another by the majority of Pagan practices, at some time and in some form.

This is the method of altering our state of consciousness, usually without reliance upon dangerous chemicals and their terrible side effects, so that we can more easily contact and speak with our guides and deities. There ARE some traditions that use mind-altering drugs to achieve this, but because these also warp the mind, eventually diminish its capacity, and carry horrendous side-effects, these are not recommended here.

Soul Journeying does involve the use of ritual, and there are many books which describe or suggest good ways forward. Here I shall describe the principles in all of these, since once again it is important that the rituals you develop to access that 'other place' are your own as far as possible.

For the purposes of this exercise, we must return to the ancient Pagan concept of 'as above, so below'. In Pagan belief systems, we accept that there is more than one 'world', more than one reality. We live in the physical world, but we accept that there is at least one other dimension, and part of our practice is to develop ways of travelling there, in order to progress spiritually.

Many believe that there is a 'higher' world, where advanced spiritual guides, sometimes called angels, and gods may be found. The ancient Greeks saw this as a physical place, Mount Olympus, but also understood that this place might be a metaphor. We may physically climb Mount Olympus, but never actually reach the palace of the gods. It exists in another dimension.

But the idea of a sacred place, where the closer links between the worlds is an important one, and one to which we shall return very shortly.

In some traditions, the Other World that we seek to access is often seen as hidden safe within the Earth, especially in those traditions which revere the Earth as Mother. Christian tradition took this idea and turned it into a place of devils, in order to bring it into disrepute. But other ancient traditions saw this in various ways. Certainly, the 'Kingdom of the Dead' (because the dead were buried in the ground) was often dark and gloomy, but did not equate to the ideas of hell, limbo and purgatory that Christians later laid upon them, although an element of judgement after death was inherent in traditions such as the Egyptian.

We must now return however to the concept of a sacred place - and also of 'sacred time'. The equinoxes, when daylight and darkness are in balance, occur twice a year and because of the elemental balance are seen as times when 'the veil between worlds' is thinner. Other times are the great festivals, and Samhain in European Witchcraft is found in many other traditions as an important time, when again the Veil is thinned. Although Soul Journeying may be practised at any time of the year and in any place, these are the types of consideration that help us to journey.

Some traditions recommend that Soul Journeying is practised, every day if possible, as a natural sequence to Meditation. Others believe that for the act to remain special, every day is not advised. Also, to return to the analogy of Mount Olympus, Sacred Place need not be the place in which we physically sit to meditate, although there is no doubt that some places help.

I shall personally never forget the experience of watching sunrise at an important Scottish stone circle, which is not locked away 'out of hours' as places such as Stonehenge are, and the amazing benefits that this brought to my Journey. It would be several hours before any tourists arrived, and I was alone with the wind, the Stones and the lightening sky.

Because it is unlikely (but not impossible) that you live close to a place as powerful as those stones, it is important to keep the essence and feeling of a place, remembered in your heart. This can become an advantage, with practise, because there will always be times when it is not physically possible to sit in your special place. But if the memory of it is clear and strong in your heart, you can take it with you anywhere you go, and always have access to it.

The place that you choose will help to frame your mind for the exercise of Soul Journeying. You may - if you wish - choose some aspect of that place, as the entrance and beginning of your journey. Or you may choose to imagine an entrance which is not there in 'real' life.

In European tradition, the Journey begins by finding a way down into the Earth. So the entrance that you visualise will give you a way to descend into the earth. A small cave in a hillside may be a good choice. If your affinity is with trees, you may visualise climbing the tree downwards, through its roots. Or perhaps you may choose to imagine a stairway that goes down, beneath the floor of a much loved building.

The steps are important. Many practitioners find it very useful to think of each step and relate it to a colour of the chakra, taking time so that each colour is absorbed and explored. At the end of your descent, you will find yourself in a private, safe space of your own. Many see this a small, private room, basic in appearance and with an uncertain source of light, although it may be something else - a woodland clearing perhaps.

Allow it to appear. Do not try to make it into an image that you choose.

Before proceeding, you should take time, over several days, to look around this space and to become familiar with it. It may contain certain basic objects. These may surprise you or bring a sense of familiarity, but you should not try to impose the presence of any object here, just because you think it represents you. As you stand here at the gateway to the Other World, you will find that your self-image may be challenged, and you should only enter with an open mind, ready to learn. This space is a very important place, in your exploration of your Pagan Pathway. This is a space for thinking, where you can replenish your spirit, and heal yourself if necessary. The doors in and out can only be opened by you, and nothing can share it with you.

The way you came in may or may not be protected by a door. But whether or not, there will be another door, which leads out into the Other World. When you are ready, you should turn the handle and step outside. Do not rush through. Pause and look around at what you can see, before proceeding.

The landscape that lies before you will be one that is significant for you. Woodland is quite usual, since there are several paths, and where they lead to is often concealed. You may see creatures or figures dotted about, even from where you stand. These will be upon the path, and should only be approached by walking along the path. It can be dangerous, here, to leave the path, so do not be tempted away from it.

Approach the nearest figure or creature, and speak to it with respect. You are now in their world. Do not expect or demand anything from them, but if they offer you a gift, receive it gratefully. This will be symbolic of something that you need at this time.

One of the creatures that you meet here will be your totem, and will feel particularly significant for you, although their appearance may surprise. Frogs and mice are just as significant as eagles and stallions! It is important to look closely at the creature that presents itself to you, which is often the first creature you meet, in the Other World. We have many cultural stereotypes regarding almost every animal, yet these can vary from place to place. For instance, we may (as a result of childhood fairy stories) have been given the idea that foxes are 'sly', - but in Scandanavia they are wise, and in the Far East, they are magical as well as clever.

When you are presented with a totem animal, during Journeying, pause for a moment and consider your own heritage and its traditions about that animal, as well as trying to see the

broader possibilities. One very good way to look at any creature is to spend some time considering the obstacles that it has to overcome in its life span, simply to survive. You will find some resonance there. The creature's strengths are the result of the challenges that it faces. The lessons and support it can offer you stem from those issues and problems.

Remember that this is probably not your totem for life, but is the creature most helpful to you right now, at this point in your life. It offers the lessons that you most need to learn right now.

In some traditions, the shaman enters a trance-like state, and is almost immediately linked to the power of his or her totem creature. These practitioners have developed their own internal ritual to open the door to that link, but the outcome is the same.

Guardians and even gods can also be found along these pathways. Do not make demands of them. You have no rights to what they offer, and may well have to earn their support, by actions either here or in the 'real' world.

Your chosen path will lead to other places, and these have a particular function. Some may be places of healing, where you can place the image of someone you know who has a need, while others may present tests and challenges. You should make access to this world a regular part of your practice, and learn from it throughout your life. There is no end result, only more adventures. The landscape can and will change, according to your needs that day.

The gods, guardians, totems and other creatures we find here must always be treated with respect, and thanked for their help and guidance, and the path must be kept to. If you see someone or something who is not accessible by using a path, do not be tempted to go to it.

When it is time to return, retrace your steps, back to your own safe, private space. Open the door and step inside. Keep this space clean and tidy. Do not rush away from it, but take a little time to consider what you have learned. Then you can return to the everyday world, by climbing the steps again. Remember to use the chakra colours in the reverse order to that by which you descended.

When you return to everyday life, you may well feel tired and thirsty, and will carry some of what you have learned back with you. Drinking water is a good plan, since genuine fluid replacement is often necessary, and you may find that if you have a need for food, it is simple, unprocessed and natural food that your body asks for. Sugar, caffeine or alcohol may well make you feel quite ill.

Also worth mentioning here is the variation known as 'lucid dreaming'. In this exercise, we practise becoming conscious of that moment when we are about to fall asleep every night, just between waking and sleeping. This is not so easy to do, but when you have mastered it, gives a ready access into the Other World. Then as you become conscious that you are in fact drifting away from the conscious world, you must practise taking control of that state. At this point you can (for instance) rise to the ceiling of the room, and look down upon ourselves. Then you can consider the world outside. It is sometimes recommended that you fix upon a point outside, a landmark of some kind, and move towards it. Look down as you do so, to see what is happening in the world. Since you are likely to practice this at night, the answer may be - not a lot. But aim for your point of reference, and stay there, looking at the world below. (There are claims that governments and the military have sometimes trained talented people to use this talent for defence, and call it 'remote viewing'.)

Then return to your body, carefully. Some people report seeing themselves attached to their body by a long, shining rope. This is also reported sometimes by those who have near-death experiences.

This tells us that there are in fact potential serious dangers in this activity, so take care. Jaqui tried this exercise for the first time, and found it easy. So easy, in fact, that she decided she must just be imagining what was happening, and that none of it had been real. Returning rapidly to her bed, she opened her eyes, but had the overpowering sensation that her left arm

was raised in the air. It did not seem to want to descend. She spread out the fingers of her left hand - and felt the mattress beneath them. Her arm was not raised in the air, but the sensation remained.

When Jaqui woke in the morning, she did not have full use of her left hand and arm, which continued to feel detached. This lasted for twenty-four hours, before returning to normal usage.

Soul journeying per se however is at the essential heart of what we do. This allows us to progress spiritually, and to learn the lessons necessary for this life. While spells and rituals are part of what we do, this is where we access the magic.

Travel safely.

## 17 Power and Service

As you pursue your personal Pathway, you will find changes in yourself. Several of these have already been mentioned, but it is worth being prepared for them. You should also understand the significance of these changes in your life.

Before you explore your spiritual life further, you should take some time to re-examine the reasons that you began, along this Way. Many individuals have long recognised a capacity for power and for action within the world, which they wish to expand and to develop. They wish to have the ability to make changes in the world around them. Many are already conscious of the magic and mystery in the universe, and wish to know it more closely. Other reasons may occur to you.

We must always be conscious that as our powers and abilities grow, we will increasingly want to use them. That there are un-thought of outcomes that will result from each action, both karmically and in this life, cannot be stressed too much. You may feel strongly about the evil someone does, but if you attack them directly, you may find yourself strongly linked to them in a future life, and with a very complicated Karma to tackle. Better to protect others from wickedness. This however takes a LOT of effort, sustained over a considerable amount of time.

To begin the discovery of Power within ourselves is heady, exciting and energising. For the first few years of exploring our personal Pathways, it is likely that we will make many karmic mistakes, whose repercussions will have to be dealt with at some point. Dealing with these may take us down side-roads, away from our Path and purpose in life. So it is best to recognise the possible consequences of any action, as early as possible. Remember that your actions operate like a pendulum, which is always trying to find and maintain the Balance in the Universe, and you will be able to see more clearly what the consequences of your intended action may be.

One of the changes in yourself that will help you to cope with this, is your increasing ability in meditation, soul journeying and listening to the guidance that is offered to you. Alongside this comes certain changes in personal habit which will help to keep your life (and therefore your abilities) on a more even keel. The change in your attitude to certain foods, drugs, alcohol and smoking is one of these, and you should not resist it. But you will also find a need within yourself for certain places, changes in the company you keep, and an increased awareness of people who are not good for you.

As we progress, we may find that we wish to use our new power increasingly for the good of others, which has positive karmic results. Or we may choose to use our abilities selfishly, to increase our own wealth and status, which has very negative karmic results, and for which we will eventually pay. While the first, more altruistic approach is recommended, this too can have potential dangers, since there are those who are essentially dependent by nature, who would take advantage of that impulse, if we let them.

We are all vaguely aware that there are those who drain us. They attach themselves like limpets, and influence our thoughts and feelings, usually in a very negative way. They make demands upon us which often include attempts to stop us developing as we should, and as we wish to. These people are emotional parasites and act as saboteurs, blocking our progress.

They also tend to undermine our self-esteem, dreams and general confidence.

As we move along our Path, the truth of what they are doing becomes more and more obvious. We find that although we have long accepted the situation, it is no longer tolerable to live life as someone else dictates. We become increasingly aware that this is someone that we must begin to move away from. The relationship is often complicated, and at first it appears that it might be impossible to completely lose the attachment.

However, it can be done. As we develop spiritually, we become aware both of increased power within ourselves, and of a sense that we should help others. The person who has already established him/herself in our life as a parasite is therefore particularly difficult to deal with. But our development demands that we should find that distance, and move on with the lives we were intended for.

This will cause trouble. The dependent will fight against the changes in you with any means at their disposal, and they will not fight fair. They will press all the emotional buttons that they can, and will resort readily to bullying and blackmail, attempting to produce feelings of guilt. We have accepted their presence (and their power) for so long, that resisting and confrontation seems difficult, perhaps impossible. Yet at the same time, the changes in you are making you stronger, more clear-headed. Your improved clarity about the situation will help you to know when to say 'No' to them, and how not to be swayed by their consequent unpleasantness. You will, as you progress, find that their behaviour has less and less power over you.

It is of course possible, depending upon the nature of the relationship, that the antagonist will even resort to violence or unpleasant rumour-mongering. You must be prepared for this, and ready to hold your head up, defend yourself and walk away.

Lies and rumours are a difficult thing to overturn, but violence ways can be found to minimise damage to your life. Violence is illegal, and once you remember this, it is possible to deal with it, and to escape from the situation. The reasons that violence and cruelty keep a hold on us are psychological. Survivors often say 'I woke up one day, and realised that there was a door, a way out'. That doorway lies within us, and as developing Pagans, we find that the way to discover it, and walk through it, becomes clearer day by day.

In the past, anyone who did not practise mainstream religion were considered fair game by those who wished to make a living and a reputation from persecuting them. In those times (now referred to as 'the Burning Times') the whole of society and the legal system was skewed so that anyone living a life that was not mainstream had hugely decreased legal rights. In Britain, for instance, in the time of the great witch trials, conjuring, spells and natural healing using charms became felonies, punishable by death or imprisonment. The law stated however that anyone charged with such a felony was not entitled to any legal help to support and represent them. Legal support and representation was only available in civil cases ('my field or your field') and the law existed as prosecution. Much has changed.

The question of pride and improved self-esteem that comes as we grow spiritually will be discussed again, later. But for now it is important to recognise that the change in you will allow you to break free of negative and sabotaging elements, and to take your life in the direction for which it was designed.

There are dangers at each point of your development. You may fall into the trap of believing that you have rights above and beyond those of other people, and that your new-found abilities are there to serve you. Whenever you do this, you will eventually suffer a setback. You may certainly gain wealth and status, but at the cost of nourishing personal relationships. Behaving in an ego-centric way can lead to self-doubt and paranoia, requiring ever increasing input from the powers that we call upon. This cycle is recognisably addictive, and because you are dealing with powers and beings that are much more powerful than yourself, very difficult to break free from.

It is important to keep sight of the fact that increased power brings increased responsibility to the planet and to others. But the means by which we help, the degree to which we 'interfere' and the beings we call upon are always significant factors. So keep these issues in mind, even when acting for good.

Do not fall into the trap of seeing yourself as someone who is good, in the sense of being better than others. We are all a mixture of good and evil. Spiritual pride is one of the most

effective ways of losing sight of ourselves and our real purpose. It will distort our Pathway, so that we no longer know for sure who we are.

As we grow in power, we discover ways of providing ourselves with protection, both from psychic and from physical attack. This is not to say, of course, that no-one will ever try to attack us. But there are ways in which their efforts can be minimised.

All protection spells begin from the practise of meditation. We sit quietly, in our preferred space. We may move into the secret space that is at the entrance to the Other World, in Soul Journeying. This certainly adds power to the proceedings, but is not absolutely necessary.

Then we visualise a circle of light around ourselves. If physical ritual is the way forward for you, you may well use an actual circle that you have made in a private part of your home. This may be permanent, or temporary. If temporary, it should be made of salt, which has huge protective influences.

Within this circle, we see ourselves becoming stronger, safer, imbued with light. Most people seek to strengthen the circle psychically by using words that describe the four points of the compass, and giving each point a name or an attribute. You can find examples of these in many books, but try them out to discover which feel right for you. Do not simply use someone else's words. Sit quietly, and repeat your certainty that you are safe and protected. Invoke your guardian, totem or deity, and say thank you to each for the help, support and protection that you know they will bring.

You may also want to include a request that when anyone tries to harm you, physically, emotionally or psychically, their intent will be returned to them.

Allow yourself as much time on this exercise as you like. Repetition is no problem, and your guardians will not object if you invoke them regularly in this way. However, you will find, as you grow stronger and as your psychic protection increases, that your words need to change. You will probably spend more time saying thank you for protection, as your sense of its presence increases.

If someone wishes to harm you, they will still try it. But the outcome will be different, now.

Other traditional Pagan activities scrying and card reading. Scrying is examining the a flat, featureless surface (a crystal ball, a black mirror, or an object of your choice that speaks to you) to help you to discover the truth of a matter. This may involve the revelation of someone's name, or the location of a person or object. It may be that in this exercise you ask about the future. There is a school of thought that says the future is not entirely fixed, and so future images, either from the cards or from a scrying exercise will always carry a slight uncertainty.

But before working in either of these ways, protection should be invoked, and the activity itself should be offered to the deity.

As personal power grows, so should the sense of responsibility in what we ask for, and how we ask it. A consciousness of the words and wishes that we use should increase. Remember that your guardians and deities are very literal, and sometimes even seem to enjoy a joke, to keep us upon the narrow pathway that takes us forward.

Power should be used to serve the best interests of the world, and should never be taken lightly. It should not be available just to support the human parasites amongst us, or for personal gain or to damage others.

Above all, beware of spiritual pride and its traps and pitfalls.

## 18 Talismans and Amulets

What is an amulet?

The word "amulet" comes from the Latin *amuletum*. Pliny mentioned an *amuletum* as "an object that protects a person from trouble" or repels evil or bad luck. Sometimes amulets are also thought of as good luck charms, and are made or worn to bring good fortune and to help us along the spiritual path. Some are used at times of particular stress, and bring a sense of comfort when life is difficult over a long, long time.

A talisman is similar, but is inscribed with words or letters, so that it acts more as a charm.

An amulet may be placed around the neck, wrist or ankle, fashioned into rings, a top for a walking stick, or carried in their own little bag. Those in their own container may be placed in the home just as easily as being carried on the person. Boats and other vehicles often feel safer if they carry an amulet.

Gems, crystals, fossils, coins, carved wood, bone or stone – and occasionally paintings, weaving or other artwork – can all be used as amulets. But the sense of protection or blessing that an amulet brings with it is not measured by its monetary value. Because most amulets are made of essentially organic material or fashioned by their owner from simple stuff, their magic lies in strength that they bring from the earth, or from the loving act of creation.

The amulet's strength lies in the feeling that it inspires, and in the belief that its close presence may indeed help with life's ups and downs. There are those who will tell you (usually on religious grounds) that to use an amulet is to leave oneself open to evil forces – or at very best to subscribe to superstition. Yet all the world's major religions honour certain symbols, images or patterns, and use these to connect with the Divine as they see it. The sense that comes to us sometimes that an amulet could help us (at this moment in time) is part of a much larger feeling. Life has come to a point (as it does, sometimes) when we are starting to feel we need a new direction, that a crossroads is approaching and – maybe – that 'something has to give'.

Making or discovering an amulet can help us to focus upon what our subconscious mind is telling us. Around the same time that the urge to find or create an amulet arises, we may also find that we want to ease back on certain other things. This may include anything – part of our diet, a habitual part of everyday life or a relationship which drains us. Or we may feel that it is time to include something in life- perhaps more water, fresh air or creative activity. All of these aspects that nudge us, requiring change, are symptomatic of a general awakening and a move towards a new set of values, or an increased spirituality.

An amulet begins as something – probably ordinary - that 'speaks' to us, and which we feel can bring comfort (or success) if we take it home with us. We have all had the feeling, walking along a beach or through the countryside, that we are about to find a treasure. Something catches the eye. Perhaps a pebble or a shell that suddenly stands out among a million others. Perhaps a feather. Perhaps a small, oddly shaped piece of wood. Perhaps a stone with a natural hole. The feel of it in our hands is curiously satisfying.

But finding a potential amulet is not limited to a chance discovery in the natural world. Sometimes we discover a treasure – and it is always a bargain! – in a second-hand shop or some other unexpected place. When we need the support of an amulet, it is always a good idea to allow ourselves to be open to whatever the universe sends, and not to ignore the possibility that a particular treasure might just be waiting for us to walk round a corner or through a particular door.

Making an amulet can be compared to the act of story-telling. The difference is that the story you are helping to develop is your own.



When something ‘speaks’ to us, we should give into the impulse to hold it, and to allow ourselves to listen to the ‘inner voice’. Something that wants to be an amulet is always pleasant and satisfying to touch. By the time we have discovered something, we have already allowed ourselves to listen to the world around us. If we have been silently (or even subconsciously) asking for help or guidance, we have already begun this process. When we suddenly feel like acting on impulse, and that impulse takes us to something special, we are listening to that inner voice. We have asked for help or guidance, and the Universe is answering us.

Amulets may come to us fully formed, but working with them in a creative way does seem to increase how effective they are. This may be as simple as putting your amulet on to a chain or necklet of your choice, or restringing crystal beads on nylon or elasticated thread so that they will not suddenly break and be lost. This is a remarkably relaxing and therapeutic activity, and one which establishes your relationship with the material you are using. Placing them thoughtfully in a particular place is also a creative act. Creative activity of any kind allows the material used to help us along our spiritual path.

You may wish to sew a small bag or carve a small box, preferably by hand, to house your treasure. You may decide to find a particular type of small box to protect it, and this will always be a bargain, too. You may see it as part of a larger creative project, which will find a special place in your home. But whatever feels right, it is certain that the act of creating, preserving or enhancing will help your amulet to retain its innate power.

A word of warning; if you decide to work with prisms, glass or candles around your home, you should be aware of the fire risk. This is obvious for candles, but prisms are also a serious cause of household fires. Hung in a window, to reflect a rainbow of colours into a room, they create a magical effect, but can also magnify light and heat on to fabrics as the sun moves around, and fire can flash into being in an instant. Please take care.

How you decide to use (or to help) your amulet is a very personal thing, and can only really develop from handling it, and allowing yourself to feel what might be the best thing to do. If you decide to restring crystal beads, it is important to decide if you wish to combine more than one type, and if so in what proportions. Balance is important, and brings satisfaction as well as efficiency. Nylon thread from a craft shop should be fine for small crystals and gemstones; 0.3 mm is recommended. But on the other hand you may feel that your amulet needs a thin leather cord. Leatherwork can be an important aspect of working with an amulet, and brings its own relaxation, challenges and satisfactions.

Metal ‘foils’ which will turn your treasure into a pendant to hang from a chain can also be easily bought from craft suppliers. If you need to glue something, araldite is better than superglue for organic materials, but do be very careful with any adhesive. Keep it to a minimum.

It may be that your amulet does not feel like something that wants to be an item of jewellery. Some people place their amulet in its own place – perhaps on the bedside, or in a particular room. It should however be given something of its own to stand on. Many do not like to be in direct sunlight, and may lose their strength. An amulet works best if it is not in close contact with more than one or two other materials (apart from your skin). Many people like to keep their amulet close to their skin, but a small bag is also a good idea, especially if you make it yourself with your amulet in mind. You might choose to very carefully drill a special stone, so that you can wear it around your neck, but weaving and embroidery are also wonderful ways of enhancing your material, so that it becomes something more.

Within this book I have listed (in alphabetical order) some of the many materials that can be used as amulets or are connected with them. Of course, no such list could ever be complete, but many of the main possibilities are covered here. These are organic materials, but an amulet is something that calls to you, so that is not absolutely essential. The final section is

an index of physical or emotional issues or outcomes, and suggestions as to which materials might help with each. Some items can be combined to help each other in certain situations, because they have complimentary actions.

It is important to remember that an amulet comes to us, in response to the need we have at this time. This is unlikely to be forever, because they are part of life's process of Change. Sometimes amulets simply vanish when the need for change is no longer there, and we must always accept that, when it happens. That is your amulet's last gift to you – the message that life has changed and that it is now time to move on.

The information offered here should help you to recognise the significance of your choices, the power of your own creative ability and the importance of listening to your inner voice and the sounds of the Universe.

## 19 Amulets (by need)

Abundance; ametrine  
Acceptance of own body; smokey quartz  
Acceptance of own life; smokey quartz, lepidolite  
Admiration; celestite  
Aggravation (lessening); rhodochrosite, amazonite  
Amplifying other crystals; smokey quartz  
Analysis; celestite, amazonite  
Angels (listening to, inviting); celestite  
Anger reduction; howlite, rhodochrosite  
Anxiety reduction; smokey quartz, lepidolite, black tourmaline  
April; diamond  
Appreciation; rose quartz  
Aquarius; amethyst  
Aries; amethyst  
Artwork; celestite  
Astrology practice; fire agate  
Attainment of high potential; tiger's eye  
August; peridot  
Auras; black tourmaline, celestite  
Authority issues; pyrite  
Awakening; amethyst  
Awareness; sunstone, golden topaz, amethyst, blue lace agate, ametrine  
Babies; rose quartz  
Balance; smokey quartz, larimar, moldovite, lemon chrysoprase, moonstone, amber  
Base chakra; smokey quartz, garnet, red jasper, black tourmaline  
Bloodstream; garnets, hematite  
Body intelligence; sugilite  
Bones strengthening; howlite  
Brighter future; smokey quartz  
Bringing safely home; garnets  
Brow chakra; celestite  
Burdens (relief); blue lace agate  
Business deals; ammonite  
Calcium deficiency; amazonite  
Calcium deposits; amazonite  
Calm; smokey quartz, garnets, howlite, black obsidian, amber, rhodochrosite, celestite, aquamarine, lepidolite, sugilite, amazonite, amethyst, ametrine  
Capricorn; smokey quartz,  
Cancers; larimar  
Cell renewal; sugilite  
Chakras; celestite  
Challenge (overcoming); amazonite  
Change (coping); moldovite, lepidolite, petrified wood, amethyst  
Cheerfulness; lemon chrysoprase  
Chemotherapy; smokey quartz  
Chi; ammonite  
Chi lin; ammonite  
Children; rose quartz

Choices; selenite, lapis lazuli  
 Clairvoyance; amazonite, amethyst  
 Clarity; garnets, danburite, selenite, black obsidian, lapis lazuli, ammonite, celestite, amazonite  
 Cleansing; garnets, orange calcite  
 Co-dependency; sunstone  
 Colonic health; celestite  
 Communication; lapis lazuli, smokey quartz, celestite, amazonite  
 Compassion; garnets, amazonite, danburite, rose quartz, rhodochrosite, agate  
 Complex ideas; celestite  
 Concentration; smokey quartz, lemon chrysoprase  
 Conception; moonstone  
 Contemplation; blue lace agate  
 Confidence; smokey quartz, pyrite, agate  
 Confusion (alleviation); smokey quartz  
 Consistency; garnets  
 Contentment; honey calcite  
 Co-operation; smokey quartz  
 Corn dollies; were traditionally made from the last sheaf of corn to be harvested, and kept through the winter by farmers to ensure a good crop the following year. Weaving corn in this way is very satisfying and provides a great focus for the mind. Dollies are usually decorated with ribbons, and hung in the house to bring a blessing. As we move along our spiritual path exercises such as the weaving of corn can provide a form of meditation, and a way of stilling the mind, so that we can listen to the inner voice.  
 Courage; garnets, jade, bloodstone, tiger's eye, amazonite  
 Creativity; garnets, carnelian, moonstone, ammonite, celestite  
 Crisis; garnets  
 Crown chakra; amethyst, charoite, clear quartz, selenite, sugilite  
 Debt; iolite  
 December; turquoise  
 Decisiveness; sunstone  
 De-cluttering the mind; smokey quartz  
 Depression; smokey quartz, orange calcite, celestite, ametrine  
 Destructive thought patterns; leopard skin jasper  
 Detachment; tiger's eye  
 Detoxification; smokey quartz, ammonite, celestite  
 Devotion; garnets  
 Digestive system; smokey quartz, celestite  
 Divine aspect; celestite, iolite  
 Doubt; pyrite, blue lace agate, lapis lazuli, golden topaz  
 Dreams (understanding of); smokey quartz, celestite  
 Dreams (turning into reality); hematite, smokey quartz, clear quartz, amazonite  
 Duty; blue lace agate  
 Egotistical ideas; aventurine  
 Emotional issues; moldovite, rhodonite, malachite, agate, amethyst  
 Energy (long term); smokey quartz, garnets  
 Energy (quick); clear quartz, moldovite, lemon chrysoprase, ametrine, hematite, golden topaz  
 Energy fields (balancing); celestite  
 Enlightenment; amethyst, labradorite

Enthusiasm for life; garnets  
Environmental concern (to heighten); smokey quartz  
Eyesight problems; labradorite  
Faith; garnets, celestite  
Fatigue; celestite  
Fears (removal); smokey quartz, selenite, black obsidian, black tourmaline  
February; amethyst  
Feminine issues; malachite  
Femininity; moonstone  
Feng shui; ammonite  
Fertility; moonstone, bryony (powdered)  
Fidelity; garnets  
Focus; lemon chrysoprase, blue lace agate  
Forgiveness; rhodonite, rose quartz, rhodochrosite  
Fresh start; bloodstone  
Friendship; garnets  
Fulfilment; amethyst  
Fun; orange calcite, honey calcite  
Gemini; celestite  
Glory; tiger's eye, golden topaz  
Good business; lemon chrysoprase  
Good harvest; corn dollies  
Good luck; ammonite, celestite, amazonite  
Grief; petrified wood  
Grounding; smokey quartz, pyrite, blue lace agate  
Guilt; amber  
Happiness; orange calcite, celestite, ametrine, hematite, tiger's eye, ammonite,  
Happy married life; amazonite  
Hard times (coping with); smokey quartz  
Harmony; aventurine, sugilite, celestite  
Harsh attitudes; amazonite  
Healing; garnets, amber, clear quartz, sugilite, moonstone, ammonite, ash, amazonite,  
agate, amethyst  
Healthy children; ammonite  
Hearing; celestite  
Heart; garnets  
Heart chakra; emerald, kunzite, aventurine, rose quartz  
Helping others; iolite  
Here and now; black obsidian  
Honour; bloodstone, tiger's eye, amazonite  
Hope; garnets, celestite, amazonite  
Hormones; moonstone  
Humility; jade  
Humour; orange calcite  
Illumination; ammonite  
Illusions; labradorite  
Imagination; garnets, clear quartz  
Inflammation; smokey quartz, rhodochrosite  
Inner spirit (growth); garnets, danburite, lapis lazuli  
Insecurity; garnets, amber

Insight; danburite, amethyst, iolite  
 Insomnia; howlite, sodalite, amethyst  
 Inspiration; carnelian, amethyst  
 Integrity; amazonite  
 Intelligence; ammonite, ametrine  
 Intestines; celestite  
 Intrusive influences; sunstone  
 Intuition; smoky quartz, sugilite, moonstone, iolite, celestite, ametrine, amethyst  
 Irritation; rhodochrosite  
 January; garnets  
 Joy; carnelian, sunstone, amethyst  
 July; ruby  
 June; pearl  
 Justice; jade  
 Karma; iolite  
 Kidneys; orange calcite  
 Kindness; larimar  
 Knowledge (about Earth's energy); ammonite  
 Kundalini energy; garnets  
 Leadership; lapis lazuli, sunstone, ammonite, amazonite  
 Links to the divine; amethyst  
 Liver impurities; garnets  
 Loneliness; petrified wood  
 Long life; jade, ammonite  
 Longstanding issues; rhodochrosite  
 Love (rekindling); red garnets  
 Love; smoky quartz, amazonite, celestite, carnelian, danburite, aventurine, rhodonite,  
 sunstone, rose quartz  
 Low spirit (raising); smoky quartz, celestite  
 Loyalty; garnets  
 Lymphatic system; orange calcite  
 Magic; moonstone  
 Major changes; moldavite  
 Male libido; ammonite  
 Manifestations; amber  
 March; aquamarine  
 Mars; garnets  
 May; emerald  
 Meditation; smoky quartz, celestite, amethyst  
 Mercury; garnets  
 Memory; hematite  
 Menstrual cramps; amazonite  
 Mental acuity; garnets, celestite, agate  
 Mind opening; moldavite, blue lace agate  
 Mood (lighten); garnets, orange calcite, blue lace agate, ametrine, amethyst, celestite,  
 moonstone  
 Moon; moonstone  
 Mothering; rose quartz  
 Motivation; garnets, carnelian  
 Muscle spasm/cramps; amazonite

Mystery; moonstone  
Nature (better understanding of); smokey quartz, green moss agate  
Neediness; amber  
Negative energy (removal of); garnets, smokey quartz, amethyst  
Negative karma; danburite  
New realms; garnets  
New phases of life; garnets  
Nightmares; smokey quartz, garnets  
November; topaz  
Nursing mothers; howlite  
Nurturing; larimar, aventurine  
Obstacles; smokey quartz, golden topaz  
Optimism; lemon chrysoprase  
October; opal  
Osteoporosis; amazonite  
Out of body experiences; celestite  
Pain (physical); smokey quartz, black obsidian, iolite  
Passion; garnets  
Past lives; garnets, petrified wood, celestite  
Patience; garnets, howlite  
Peace; garnets, moldavite, aventurine, sodalite, celestite, green moss agate, ametrine  
Perception of self; garnets, ametrine  
Pisces; amethyst  
Pituitary gland; garnets  
Playfulness; carnelian  
Pleiades; celestite  
Pluto; garnets  
PMS; moonstone  
Power; amethyst  
Practicality; smokey quartz  
Pride; tiger's eye  
Prophecy; amazonite  
Prosperity; amonite  
Protection; salt, smokey quartz, amethyst, fire agate, ametrine  
Protection against witchcraft or ill-wishing; salt, birch, clover, painted eyes, rowan  
Psychic ability; amazonite, ametrine, amethyst  
Public speaking; celestite  
Radiation therapy; smokey quartz  
Raising mood; chrysocolla, garnets, orange calcite  
Reading; celestite  
Reality; malachite, black tourmaline  
Reassurance; honey calcite, aquamarine, lepidolite  
Recharging energy; chrysocolla  
Refreshment; chrysocolla, ametrine, green moss agate  
Regeneration; jade  
Rehabilitation programme; smokey quartz  
Rejuvenation; sodalite  
Relationships; smokey quartz, agate  
Relaxation; larimar, chrysocolla, clear quartz, aquamarine, fluorite, sodalite, black tourmaline

Resolution; petrified wood  
 Respect; celestite  
 Responsibility; blue lace agate, sodalite  
 Revitalising; garnets, chrysocolla, orange calcite, ametrine  
 Riches; ammonite  
 Ricketts; ash  
 Righteousness; garnets  
 Sacral chakra; amber, carnelian, citrine, orange calcite, topaz  
 Safety; smokey quartz, black obsidian, labradorite, fire agate  
 Sagittarius; celestite  
 Saturn; amethyst  
 Scorpio; smokey quartz  
 Security; hematite, green moss agate  
 Self-respect/self-esteem; garnets, smokey quartz, leopard skin jasper, pyrite, rose quartz,  
 sodalite, amazonite  
 Sense of belonging; petrified wood  
 Separation from loved ones; garnets  
 September; sapphire  
 Serenity; smokey quartz, honey calcite, aquamarine, fluorite, blue lace agate  
 Service of others; larimar  
 Sharing; agate  
 Sincerity; amazonite  
 Skin conditions; rose quartz  
 Solace; garnets  
 Solar plexus chakra; smokey quartz, golden topaz, tiger's eye, citrine  
 Solidarity; smokey quartz, hematite  
 Soothing; howlite  
 Soul/spiritual journeying; danburite, selenite, aventurine, celestite, amber  
 Spine; hematite  
 Spiritual awakening; amethyst, ametrine  
 Spiritual awareness; celestite  
 Stability; smokey quartz, moldovite, amazonite, black obsidian  
 Stamina; garnets, amazonite  
 Stimulation; garnets  
 Strength; garnets, celestite, agate  
 Stress; garnets, amethyst, aventurine, sodalite, blue lace agate  
 Studying; celestite  
 Success; garnets, tiger's eye, golden topaz  
 Survival instinct; garnets  
 Swelling; smokey quartz  
 Teeth; howlite  
 Telepathy; smokey quartz  
 Tension; aventurine  
 Third eye chakra; amethyst, blue calcite, lapis lazuli  
 Thirty-three (number); celestite  
 Throat chakra; celestite, amazonite, aquamarine, chrysocolla, lapis lazuli, turquoise,  
 sodalite  
 Tonic; garnets, chrysocolla  
 Too hard on oneself; larimar  
 Tooth decay; amazonite



Transformation; moldovite, garnets, leopard skin jasper  
Traumatic situations; garnets, rhodonite, amazonite  
Travel; garnets  
True identity/potential; blue lace agate, lapis lazuli  
Trust; selenite, fire agate  
Truth; garnets, amazonite, celestite, aventurine  
Uncertainty; black obsidian  
Unconditional love; aventurine, rose quartz  
Understanding; garnets  
Unproductive thoughts; black tourmaline  
Uranus; amazonite  
Valour; bloodstone, tiger's eye  
Vibrancy; tiger's eye  
Virgo; amazonite  
Water-related illness; moonstone  
Wealth; ammonite, celestite  
Well-being; ammonite, malachite, fire agate  
Willpower; garnets  
Wisdom; jade, danburite, ametrine, amethyst, lepidolite, agate  
Wishes; ash  
Worry; garnets, smokey quartz, howlite, honey calcite, clear quartz, sodalite  
Writing; celestite, amazonite  
Yin yang balance; celestite, amazonite

## 20 Materials for Amulets and their uses

Abalone (Shell); handling and calming emotional situations, soothing to the emotions, promote cooperation, stimulates psychic development and intuition, and promotes imagination in a healthy way, associated with the first three chakras, helpful for arthritis and other joint disorders, muscle problems, the heart, and digestion.

Aegerine; a high energy stone that is often used for energizing, protects against psychic attacks and negative energy, used in energy healing, for broken relationships, eliminating group pressure, and strengthening self-acceptance, helps build self-esteem, self-sufficiency, and helps follow your heart, associated with the root and solar plexus chakras, immune system, general healing and helping the body heal itself.

Agate; compassion, confidence, emotional issues, healing, mental acuity, sharing, strength, wisdom, good protective energy stone, especially for children, very calming and soothing, strengthens the body's connection to the earth, gives courage, energy, strength, dispels fears, increase self-confidence, grounding the emotions, emotional healing, resolving bitterness and resentments, harmony, improves and harmonizes relationships, greatly enhances healing, enhances creativity and stimulates the intellect, brings good luck, issues of the teeth and gums.

Agate Eyes; eye-like patterns/formations of agate, often used as charms against the evil eye, envy, and protection from black magic

Ajoite; peace and harmony, release and overcome sorrow, anger, fear, and heal old emotional wounds, helps connect to the Higher Self and God/Universe/Goddess, meditation, remove and release negative energies from the physical, emotional, and etheric bodies, transformation, change and growth, throat and heart chakras, spiritual healing, spiritual seeking, powerful healing booster.

Ajoite, Angel White ; combines both the energies of Ajoite and Quartz, bringing both into higher realms of energy, gentle, harmonious energies, high angelic realm vibrations, meditation to reach higher consciousness and deeper meditations, third eye and crown chakras

Amazonite; lessening aggravation, analysis, calcium deficiency, calm, overcoming challenge, clairvoyance, clarity, communication, compassion, courage, turning dreams into reality, good luck, happy married life, harsh attitudes, healing, honour, hope, integrity, leadership, love, menstrual cramps, muscle spasm/cramps, osteoporosis, prophecy, psychic ability, relationships, self respect/self esteem, sincerity, stability, stamina, traumatic situations, truth, writing, yin yang balance

Amber; balance, healing, calm, guilt, healing, insecurity, manifestations, neediness, sacral chakra, soul journeying

Amethyst; Aquarius, February, awakening, spiritual awareness and development, calm, coping with change, clairvoyance, crown chakra, emotional issues, healing, enlightenment, fulfilment, insight, insomnia, inspiration, intuition, joy, links to the divine, meditation, lightening mood, removal of negative energy, protection, psychic ability, Saturn, spiritual awakening, stress, third eye chakra, wisdom

Ametrine; abundance, awareness, calm, depression relief, quick energy, happiness, intelligence, intuition, lightening mood, peace, perception of self, power, protection, psychic ability, refreshment, revitalising, spiritual awakening, wisdom

Ammonite; longevity, health, business deals, chi, chi lin, clarity, creativity, happiness, detoxification, feng shui, good luck, healthy children, illumination, intelligence, leadership, knowledge about Earth Energy, male libido, prosperity, well being

Aquamarine; calm, March, reassurance, relaxation, serenity

Ash tree/wood; healing, wishes

Aventurine; egotistical ideas, harmony, heart chakra, love, nurturing, peace, soul journeying, stress, tension, truth, unconditional love  
Birch wood; protection against psychic attack  
Black obsidian; calm, scrying, clarity, removal of fears, here and now, physical pain, safety, stability, uncertainty  
Black tourmaline; anxiety reduction, auras, base chakra, removal of fears, reality grounding, relaxation, unproductive thoughts  
Bloodstone; courage, fresh start, honour, valour  
Blue calcite; third eye chakra  
Blue Lace Agate; awareness, relief from burdens, doubt, contemplation, duty, focus, mind opening, grounding, lightening mood, responsibilities, serenity, stress, true identity potential,

gentle, calming stone that engenders tranquility, assists in flight, grace, reaching higher spiritual planes, communicating with angels and activating the throat chakra, eases the harsh edge of communication in difficult times, enhances public speaking, and smooth discussions, inspiration, inner attunement, miracles, protection, arthritis, headaches, colic, digestive issues, growth, throat, immune system, skin especially eczema, and bones, Air.

Bone/horn; characteristics of the original animal, strength  
Carnelian; creativity, inspiration, joy, love, motivation, playfulness, sacral chakra  
Celestite; admiration, analysis, listening to angels and guardians, artwork, auras, brighter future, calm, chakras, clarity, improved colonic health, communication, complex ideas, contemplation, creativity, depression relief, detoxification, digestive system, divine aspect, understanding dreams, balancing energy fields, faith, fatigue, harmony, good luck, Gemini, happiness, hearing, hope, intestines, intuition, love, raising low spirits, meditation, mental acuity, lightening mood, out of body experiences, past lives, peace, Pleiades, public speaking, reading, respect, Sagittarius, soul journeying, spiritual awareness, strength, studying, truth, writing, yin yang balance

Charoite; crown chakra  
Chrysocolla; raising mood, re-charging energy, refreshment, relaxation, revitalising, tonic  
Citrine; sacral chakra, solar plexus chakra  
Clear Quartz; crown chakra, turning dreams into reality, quick energy, healing, imagination, relaxation, worry

Clover; protection against psychic attack  
Coins; wealth, prosperity  
Corn dollies; prosperity, protection, good harvest  
Danburite; clarity, compassion, growth of inner spirit, insight, love, dealing with bad or negative karma, soul journeying, wisdom

Diamond; April  
Emerald; May, Taurus, creativity, heart chakra  
Eyes (painted); protection against ill-wishing and psychic attack  
Feathers; air, angels, spirit guides, spirit messages, escape  
Fire Agate; astrology practice, protection, safety, trust issues, well-being,  
Flint; survival  
Flowers; different impact from different flowers - but do consider how briefly flowers will survive after being cut

Fluorite; relaxation, serenity  
Fossils; endurance  
Garnet; base chakra, safe return home, guidance, bloodstream, calm, clarity, cleansing, compassion, consistency, fidelity, devotion, contemplation, courage, creativity, coping with crisis, long term energy, enthusiasm for life, faith, friendship, healing, heart, hope,

imagination, growth of inner spirit, insecurity, January, Kundalini energy, liver impurities, love (re-kindling), loyalty, invoking Mars or Mercury, mental acuity, lightening mood, motivation, removal of negative energy, new realms, new phases of life, nightmares, passion, past lives, patience, peace, perception of self, pituitary gland, Pluto, revitalising, righteousness, self-respect/self-esteem, separation from loved ones, solace, stamina, stimulation, strength, stress, success, survival, tonic, transformation, traumatic situations, travel, truth, understanding, willpower, worry

Glass; clarity

Gold; sun magic, wealth, prosperity, power, sun

Golden Topaz; awareness, doubts, quick energy, glory, overcoming obstacles, success

Granite; strength

Green Moss Agate; better understanding of Nature, peace, refreshment, security

Hematite; bloodstream, turning dreams into reality, quick energy, happiness, memory, security, solidarity, spine

Honey calcite; fun, reassurance, serenity, worry

Howlite; anger reduction, bones strengthening, calm, insomnia, nursing mothers, teeth, worry

Iolite; debt, divine aspect, helping others, insight, intuition, karma, physical pain, patience, soothing

Iron; strength, protection

Jade; longevity, courage, humility, justice, regeneration, wisdom

Kunzite; heart chakra

Labradorite; enlightenment, eyesight, illusions (to dispel), safety

Lapis lazuli; reincarnation, past life exploration, making good choices, clarity, communication, doubts, growth of inner spirit, leadership, third eye chakra, true identity potential

Larimar; balance, support for carers, kindness, nurturing, relaxation, service of others, too hard on oneself

Lemon chrysoprase; balance, cheerfulness, concentration, quick energy, focus, good business, optimism

Leopard Skin Jasper; dealing with destructive thought patterns, self-respect/self-esteem, transformation

Lepidolite; acceptance of own life, anxiety reduction, calm, coping with change, reassurance, wisdom

Lignum vitae; longevity

Malachite ; emotional issues, feminine issues, reality grounding, well-being

Mistletoe; protection

Moldavite; balance, coping with major change, emotional issues, quick energy, mind opening, peace, stability, transformation

Moonstone; balance, moon magic, promote conception, creativity, femininity, fertility, hormones, intuition, general magic, lightening mood, mystery, pre-menstrual tension, water related illness

Mother of pearl; adjunct to moon magic

Oak; strength, loyalty, longevity

Obsidian; (black) scrying

Opal; sadness, October

Orange calcite; cleansing, depression relief, fun, happiness, humour, kidneys, lymphatic system, lightening mood, revitalising, sacral chakra

Painting; bringing wishes and visualisation into reality (see also eyes)

Pearl; June

Peridot; August  
 Petrified wood; coping with change, longevity, grief, loneliness, past lives, resolution of problems or issues, sense of belonging  
 Pyrite; authority issues, confidence, doubts, grounding, self-respect/self-esteem  
 Red Jasper; base chakra, healthy sexuality  
 Rhodonite; emotional issues, forgiveness, love, traumatic situations  
 Rhodocrosite; lessening aggravation, anger reduction, calm, compassion, forgiveness  
 Rose Quartz; appreciation, love, caring, babies, children, motherhood, compassion, forgiveness, heart chakra, inflammation, irritation, long standing issues, self-respect/self-esteem, skin conditions, unconditional love  
 Rowan; protection against psychic attack  
 Ruby; July  
 Runes; as per meaning of individual runestone  
 Salt; protection (general), protection against psychic attack  
 Sapphire; September  
 Seaweed; health, prediction  
 Selenite; making good choices, clarity, crown chakra, removal of fears, soul journeying, trust issues  
 Silver; moon magic, psychic amplification  
 Smokey quartz; acceptance of one's own body, acceptance of own life, amplifying other crystals, anxiety reduction, balance, base chakra, brighter future, Capricorn, during chemotherapy, communication, concentration, confidence, alleviation of confusion, co-operation, de-cluttering the mind, depression relief, detoxification, digestive system, understanding dreams, turning dreams into reality, long term energy, increasing environmental concerns, removal of fears, grounding, coping with hard times, inflammation, intuition, love, raising low spirits, meditation, better understanding of nature, removal of negative energy, nightmares, overcoming obstacles, physical pain, practicality, protection, during radiation therapy, rehabilitation programme, relationships, safety, Scorpio, self-respect/self-esteem, serenity, solar plexus chakra, solidarity, stability, swelling, telepathy  
 Sodalite; insomnia, peace, rejuvenation, relaxation, responsibilities, self-respect/self-esteem, stress  
 Stone; strength, (with natural holes) protection  
 Sugilite; body intelligence, calm, cell renewal, crown chakra, harmony, healing, intuition  
 Sunstone; awareness, relief from co-dependency, decisiveness, intrusive influences, joy, leadership, love  
 Teeth; essence of the donor  
 Tiger's eye; courage, attainment of high potential, detachment, glory, happiness, honour, pride in activities, solar plexus chakra, success, valour, vibrancy  
 Topaz; (golden) awareness, November, sacral chakra, solar plexus chakra  
 Tourmaline; (black) anxiety reduction  
 Turquoise; December

## 21 Sexuality

Sexuality is important, in the Pagan world.

Traditional images of most types of Pagan include ideas about Pagan sexuality. Again, the image that is presented by non-Pagans (that is to say, Mainstream people) is that Pagans indulge in a great deal of - probably inappropriate - sexual practices and behaviour. When non-Pagans refer to the sexuality of a Pagan, they are not usually being complimentary.

In popular thinking, many Pagan ways celebrate their festivals purely by indulging all their sexual urges. Their meetings and gatherings include public sexual acts, in which participation is compulsory. This is not true. There are those groups who agree among themselves to include sex as part of their gathering. There are certainly couples who celebrate key times of the year by creating sexual magic, which we will return to in a moment. There are individuals who create sexual magic at certain times, although their partner is unaware that he or she is part of a ritual, and only recalls the experience as startling and exceptional.

So sexuality is part of many Pagan Pathways, and attitudes to sexuality are among the things that set the Pagan apart from the mainstream person.

Why is this? And what is the truth of Pagan sexuality? - Of course, there are as many attitudes to sexuality as there are individuals, but there is no doubt that Pagans tend to be freer in their attitudes, more ready to celebrate their sexuality, and happier to see themselves as sexual beings. Pagans tend to be proud of their sexuality, which puts them in contrast to many mainstream religions, who become beset by guilt and inhibition.

Feeling good about one's sexuality is an important part of personal self-esteem, and a powerful way to improve the individual sense of self-worth. These cannot improve if someone is caught in the trap of negative thinking about a basic part of their personality. Guilt and shame will play havoc with any possibility of personal growth.

If you have read through this book and not just skipped to this chapter, I hope that you will have a clearer idea of your personal answer to the questions we asked in the first pages. Are you a Pagan? If so, how do you discover your Pagan nature, and decide upon what spiritual pathway is right for you? How does the discovery of your Pathway impact upon your life? Where does all this leave you, in relation to the rest of the world?

If you have decided you are a Pagan, and discovered your own Way, where does that leave you? What are you letting yourself in for?

To explore your own Pathway and to discover yourself as a Pagan is a voyage of self-discovery. You may find, at the end, an increased interest in mainstream religion and perhaps choose to return to the faith of your childhood. This is not a loss or a failure of any kind. When you choose how to proceed, as a spiritual being, it is less important where your journey led you. You will arrive at last at the place where you are most comfortable, wiser and more committed, simply because examined other possibilities.

What matters in any religion is that it comforts, supports and nurtures you. Exploration of various philosophies is good, then, because there are so many places that we might find ourselves, where something just does not sit well with our basic natures.

Move away from anything that makes you feel less sure of yourself, or leaves you with a sense of decreased self-worth.

But if you have decided that your nature is essentially Pagan, and have some idea of which gods and approaches speak to you personally, then your task is to move forward, and to discover what that Pathway asks of you.

By now, you will have realised that in this book there is no certainty that joining a group will enhance your spiritual growth. Many individuals prefer to remain solitary, and feel no need to join any type of group, - which does not mean that they are excluded from larger gatherings of interest to them.

But a group is a closed affair, and its members will want to check you out, as you will want to check them. This is important, and if you are not comfortable with the form or ethos of a group, they are not for you, and you are not for them. Throughout this book, you have been asked to reflect upon what you are looking for. By now you will be familiar with the possibility of looking within yourself for the sense of rightness which says 'this is for me'. Ignore these gut feelings at your peril.

Anyone (or group) who tries to exploit your spiritual search by insisting upon a situation that is uncomfortable for you, is abusive. There are certainly individuals whose pleasure comes from controlling others, as there are in any religion. But it is important to recognise them, and to walk away whenever uncomfortable with what is being asked.

The Gardnerian 'Law' states 'An it harm none, do what thou wilt... and take the consequences'. A simple-sounding rule, but with huge implications. Importantly - 'Do what THOU wilt' - not what someone else insists upon. And this is based upon the premise 'An it harm none', which excludes controlling, coercing and abusing others for personal pleasure.

Attitude to Sexuality within any group - or with any partner that you find along the way - is key. Every individual has their own feelings about what they are happy or comfortable with, and any group that tries to impose actions on someone that they do not naturally subscribe to, is controlling and damaging, not nurturing.

Similarly, any group which insists upon the use of chemicals, stimulants and other drugs should be viewed carefully. All of these may appear to increase your perception, but decrease your judgement. The other-worldly that you experience is more than likely to be an illusion, rather than the spiritual progress that you seek. The experience itself is unlikely to be a true one, and will at least in part be coloured by the mind-altering substance that is used.

None of these substances are known for actually enhancing sexual ability. - Quite the reverse. So they will also not work for you in terms of the personal growth and increased sense of self-worth that a good experience brings.

So while the popular image of a practising Pagan includes ideas of wild sexual practice, probably in a group, there are many reasons why this should not be the case.

The majority of practicing Pagans keep their private life private, and this includes their sexual practices. A committed and regular partner who is also conscious of the magic that sexuality can add to the world is a great asset. Couples who practise in this way, rarely miss the opportunity to make sexual magic at the times of the festivals, but in private. They may begin by spending some time in meditation together, so that the experience begins at an already enhanced level. They are certainly conscious of the changes in the Universe at this time, and responding to them. Each of them may choose to invoke a particular deity, and invite them in.

Because sex is a celebration of who we are and of the Universe in general, the couple approaches it in a different way. A spirit of increased joy may follow. Sex becomes a statement both of reverence for the god, and pride in oneself. During sexual magic, the personal sense of strength is increased, and wishes made during this time gain extra power. A certain degree of skill is required to keep the focus of the wish clear, during sex. Practice helps.

Some couples choose to practice Tantra, which is a whole subject in itself, but one which you might wish to explore with your partner. Tantric practice centres around the development of increased personal control within sex, and can raise the experience to new heights, as well as prolonging the time immensely. Consider this approach if you have a solid relationship, as it really does mean a commitment of years and fidelity.

During sexual magic, invoking or calling upon a deity results in a spectacular experience, which can be used to thank that deity as well as celebrating the moment. In this, the

individual calls upon their chosen deity, and invites them into their body, so that their essence becomes part of the human who has called them.

Please note; a deity cannot be summoned into someone else's body. Attempts to do so may prove catastrophic for the summoner.

The experience of 'internalising' a deity can be so overwhelming as to be terrifying, and must always be done respectfully. It is NOT recommended for anyone with a heart condition, or a tendency to asthma. You may believe that you know and understand your chosen deity, but in fact you are invoking a powerful, primal force of nature, whose strength is much greater than your own.

Think carefully about what you hope to achieve, here, before you invoke. Sexual magic and celebration to do require an invocation to be successful. So if you choose to use this approach, it should be because the moment requires it, to make your festival, celebration or thanksgiving more potent.

Finally, to return to the beginning of this chapter, increased sexuality (and pride in that sexuality) are a natural progression along your spiritual path. This goes hand-in-hand with improved self-esteem, and the sense that you have a right to be here, working within the world, preferably for good.

While the denigratory popular image of the Pagan as someone whose sexuality is larger than usual, and may even be threatening, there is no doubt that the sexual beings that we are deserve to be recognised and encouraged.

An it harm none....



## 22 Consequences; As Above, So Below

There are always consequences, to everything that we do.

During the course of this book, you have been asked to reflect and to re-consider your own motivations and sense of self, in relation to the world. Your spiritual pathway is on-going, and will last throughout your life and beyond, once you have begun. Spiritual belief of any kind usually accepts that there some form of life after death, whether in the form of heaven, hell, purgatory, reincarnation or a combination of these.

Be prepared to make the commitment to the Journey, and to check out every step as you take it, stepping back whenever you seem to be moving away from what feels right and good for you.

You began to read this book, because of your sense of a need for ‘something more’. Initially, we asked you about your feelings regarding being a Pagan. Is a Pagan Pathway what you are seeking? If so, which one? Which deity can speak to you? - This will undoubtedly be someone who reflects or supervises those things in life that are dearest to your heart. What creative activity matters most to you? Which of the gods is particularly good at encouraging or taking care of that? You might be surprised at what you find, but once you do, tokens and amulets significant to that deity will start to appear in your life.

Once you are on the right path, your personal life will take new directions and move forward in sometimes unexpected - but always satisfying - ways.

The sense of ‘something more’, which we are returning to now, is key to the process of exploring Pagan Pathways. Human beings may argue forever as to whether deities even exist, but the fact remains that those who have no ‘sense’ of them will never be persuaded that they do. Those who do have a sense of ‘something more’ will not be persuaded that they don’t. All this book asks you to do, is to look within yourself for guidance and to explore the clues that come your way.

Some mainstream religions consider that they are the only ones who ‘pray’, while others are seen as casting spells. In fact this is a mis-representation. All prayer is an invocation. It tends to follow a format. An Anglican priest explained this to me when I was a child, as follows; -

“The ‘Lord’s Prayer’ is a spell. It calls upon God, asks for something (including forgiveness) and thanks him. This is a standard format for prayer, whatever your beliefs, and it asks for something to be changed or improved. What some call spells also follow this format.”

(Where I grew up, the history of the Craft is strong, and could be recognised as a force for good by many, even the mainstream clergy.)

‘Something more’ is the belief that there is more to the Universe than meets the eye. Most belief systems are certain that the world we see around us is not the only one, and perhaps not even the ‘truest’ reality. Pagan belief systems, in common with several others, imagine one or two other realms.

One is deep within the earth, and contains access to elementals, guides and a parallel world which can teach us much about our own, as we explore it. It is to this place that we go when we are soul journeying, so that our guides and guardians can speak with us and help us along to the next step of the Way. This has nothing in common with Hell, or the realm of the Dead, which are traditionally also seen as being underground, simply because the dead are buried there. The ‘underworld’ is a place of great power, and a Jungian analyst would equate this area as that basic part of our selves which we must learn to listen to, to love and to explore.

The ‘Higher’ realm is where gods, angels, guiding spirits and so on live, and this is harder to experience, although some practices (particularly shamanic) may help us to find our way there. This is a more intellectual and enlightened place, and harder to access, although some

who practice Dreamwork can become quite adept. For the majority of us, however, it is not easily accessible.

The middle realm is where we live, day to day.

The middle realm is far from unimportant, and our dealings with it should not be neglected. As we progress, we realise more and more that care of this realm is something that our deity requires of us. We hear the phrase ‘as above, so below’, and understand it to mean that whatever we do here will have an impact within the other two realms, and on how our Path proceeds there. Similarly, whatever we do in those areas that is strong and positive will have an impact on our daily lives, in the ‘real’ world.

The concept ‘as above, so below’ should never be forgotten or disregarded. Progress in one realm impacts upon the others, and upon life and karma to come.

As the Universe unfolds for us and our Path is revealed, we must travel on. Our strength and increasing courage come from our personal growth, and are among the greatest gifts of the gods. There are setbacks, sometimes, and we all make wrong turnings. But because we practice honesty and self-examination, we can be sure that we will make progress and that the gods and guardians that we honour will always be there for us.

The Pathway that is right for us as individuals will provide comfort, support and guidance, even when times are dark and desperate.

‘An it harm, none, do what thou wilt... And take the Consequences.’

Blessed Be

About the Author;

Rowan Scot-Ryder is a successful British writer, of both fiction and non-fiction, living in the north of Britain. Her family roots are in a place known for (European) witchcraft.

In this book, Rowan offers guidance to any considering a Pagan Pathway for themselves, but without suggesting that any route is better than another. The reader is guided through the personal reflections that lead to where an individual needs to be, and warned about the pitfalls.

For beginners and for those already on their personal spiritual Path, this book can offer refreshing insights and suggestions as to how to discover and explore Pagan Pathways further.