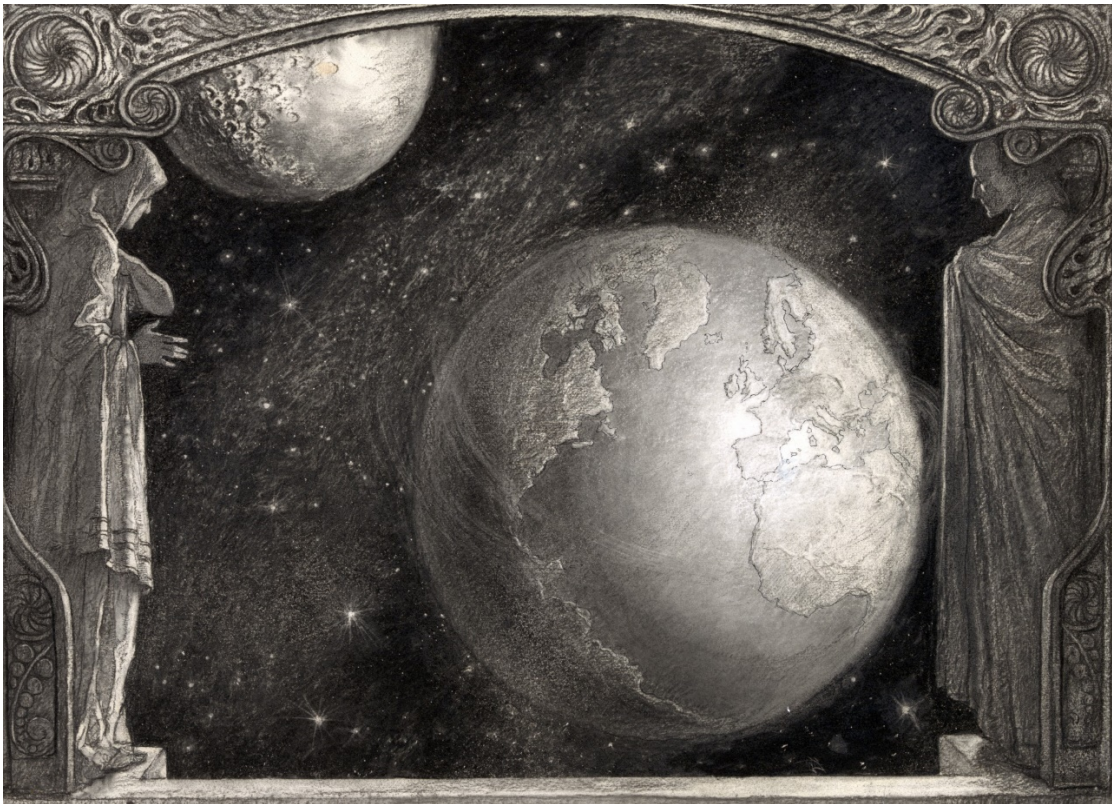


Suggested Esbat Practices for Initiates and Members
of
Circulos Tenebris Matrem Arcanas
Circle of the Dark and Mysterious Mother



The symbol of the Dark Goddess is the new moon. She is the Crone, the Great Queen, the Supreme War Goddess. She is both fate and death, the cradle and the grave. She is also a warrior, a protector, a wise woman, and a healer. She represents old age, winter, the waning moon, and destruction. The Dark Goddess is the patroness of CTMA. She rules revenge, the night, magick, and prophecy. But She also rules rebirth, reflection, and transformation. For the purposes of this study guide, She is the Pillar of Severity.

Shadows have always been a source of mystery. Often, fear and terror rule the dark places, holding our imagination captive and sometimes paralyzing us with the horror of the unknown. The shadows hold the secret to our own rising rebirth, the secret of the wisdom of ourselves. The ultimate mystery is that of knowing oneself. This is the lesson the Dark Goddess teaches. The way of the Dark Goddess is the way of the mirror, truth and reflection. She is not the kind and gentle Mother Goddess, who coaxes us to explore our lives. Rather, She is clarity, like the sword of the Warrior Goddess Morrigan and the sickle of Hecate, cutting away without hesitation all that does not serve. She is wild and free, free from slavery of spirit and body, like the demonized Lilith. She is the bringer of death and destruction, like Kali Ma, who separates us from our illusions and false truth. She is the light in the shadows, Hecate's illuminating lantern. She is what is at the end of our journeys and spiral dances. She is the one who greets us on the other side of this lifetime.

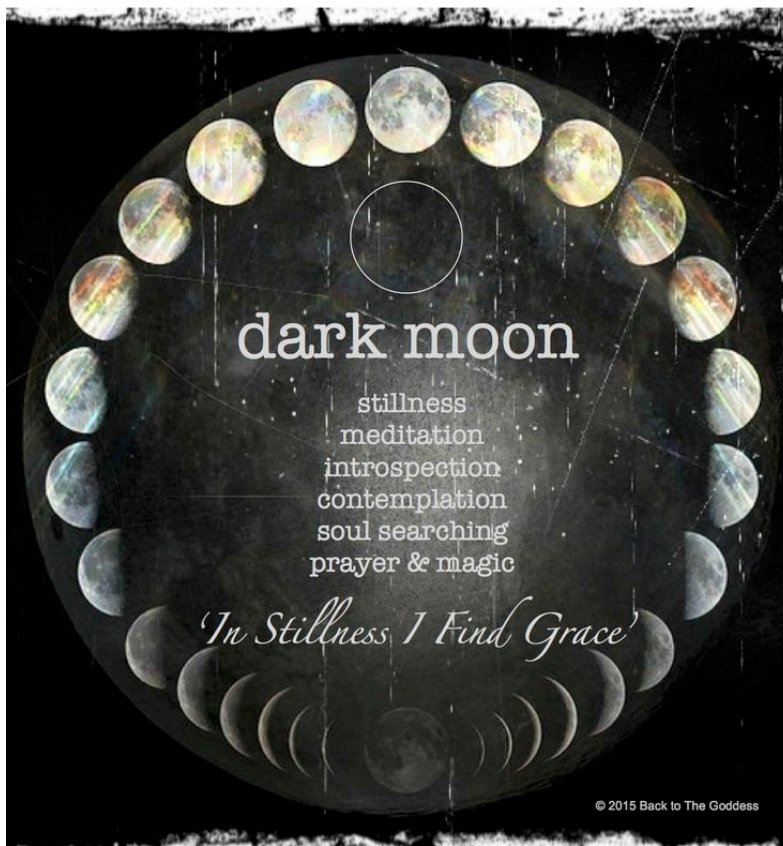
Reasons for invoking this Goddess during the Esbat of the New Moon might be for justice, protection, wisdom, to gain strength and for divinations. She is also helpful in banishing fear, illness, or bad habits. She protects children and is helpful for general balancing purposes. As with all things, this monthly ritual can be as elaborate or as simple as the practitioner chooses. The practice described here is a simple one that simply recognizes the benefit of regularly aligning oneself with the force, flow and form of the universe.

BASIC SUPPLIES: A black candle, oil of your choosing (i.e. cypress, cedar, cinnamon, spikenard, frankincense, myrrh), censer, complimentary incense of your choosing, a black stone or crystal (i.e. rutilated quartz, obsidian, hematite, jet, onyx, etc.)

OPTIONAL SUPPLIES: A crystal or tool for inscribing the candle, an object for scrying, tarot cards, journal, initiatory smudge, wedding feast/cakes & ale (ginger snap, molasses cookie, or any unleavened bread like a tortilla or cracker with red wine or grape juice), or any other items that seem appropriate.

PRACTICE: Once you have set your altar or workspace with the above items, begin by performing the Kabbalistic Cross. Anoint yourself (forehead and palms) and then anoint the candle with the oil. Inscribe the candle for the purposes of intent. Light the candle and recite one of the following three (3) invocations:

Sephirot of Hod



*I call upon Michael, who is like unto God
Within your protection I seek the realm of Elohim Tzavaot
May Your Splendor grace and sustain me now and forever.
Teach me of love and to challenge that which does not serve.
I seek to descend into my own underworld without fear
So that I might come to know myself with clarity.*

Envision the Dark Maiden and light the incense in offering to Her.

Sephirot of Gevurah



*I call upon Kamael, seraphim of Fire
Raise my consciousness as I seek the realm of Elohim Givor
May I be carried to empowerment in the Chariot of the Great Warrior.
Teach me of passion and to be courageous in creating resolution of conflicts.
I seek to sever ego and fantasy to allow clarity of mind and spirit
So that I might transform and rise to enlightenment.*

Envision the Dark Mother and light the incense in offering to Her.

Sephirot of Binah



*I call upon Tzafkiel, keeper of the Book of Life
Inscribe my spirit as I seek the realm of Elohim, Aimma of All
Through your Immanence may my spark of being be birthed into eternity.
Teach me of Your Mystery that I may come to understand creation.
I seek to see Your face at the end of all desire
So that I might come to eternal consciousness and enlightenment.*

Envision the Dark Crone and light the incense in offering to Her.

After the invocation, take the stone into your hand and breathe deeply as you enter into introspection or meditation. This is where you can perform a working or spell of some kind, do a Tarot reading, or journal. Once this is completed, be sure to ground yourself in some way. This is traditionally the purpose of cakes & ale in pagan practices. Yoga, chanting, or simply touching earth with your feet and hands are other options. Once grounded, perform the Kabbalistic Cross once more and extinguish the candle. Take the stone with you as you traverse the following month.....and Blessed Be!

Below is an adaptation from Doreen Valiente's Charge of the Goddess. The author is unknown.

The Charge Of The Dark Goddess

Listen to the words of the Dark Mother, who of old was called Hecate, Nuit, Morrigan, Banba, Erda, Macha, MotherNight, Sekhmet, and many other names:

Whenever you seek wisdom, at the time of the Darkening Moon, come together in love and trust and learn of Me, who am the Wisest of Crones...Ye who search the mysteries of the Earth, the secrets of Air and Darkness, of Blood and Fire, the silence of the uttermost stars, come unto me, and I shall whisper to you in the depths of midnight.

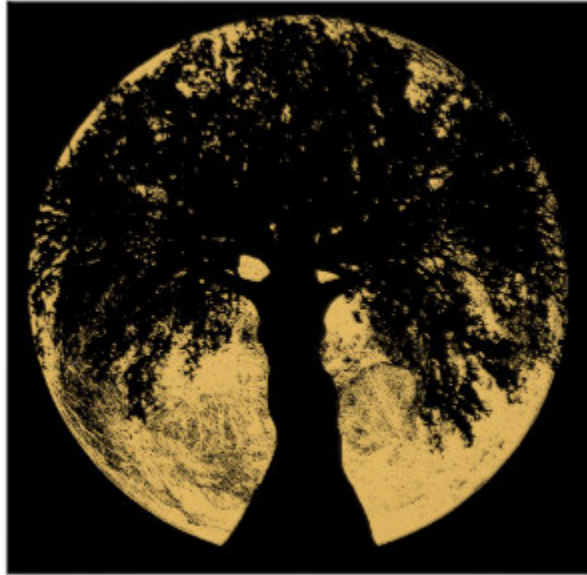
Ye shall approach Me in silence, and as a sign that ye are free from fear, your breast you shall bare to My blade...for fear has no place in My mysteries, and that which you seek of me will destroy you if you fear it.

For I am the dolmen arch beyond which stretch the mysteries of infinity. I am the silence before birth and after death. I am the clouded mirror in which you scry your own soul. I am mist in the twilight, the vast and starry sky of midnight, shadows on the Moon.

All things come to Me in the end, and yet I am the beginning of all. I meet you at the crossroads, I lead you through the darkness, My hand you grasp in the passage between the worlds. To those that toy with Me am I an instrument of self-destruction. yet to the true seeker do I bring knowledge beyond mortal comprehension.

Of you shall I demand the utter truth of all that you are, and in return shall I give you all that you may be, all that I am. For My wisdom is beyond the Ages, and knowledge of My Secrets is power over self, over fear, over death. Nor do I demand aught of you which you cannot give. For I am the Mother of Mysteries, and as you know Me, so shall you learn to know yourself.

Esbat of the Full Moon



For those wishing to observe both lunar esbats, Mother Goddess is the symbol of the full moon. To align with CTMA, She is the Pillar of Mercy and the practice above can simply be adapted accordingly. Typically the 8 annual Sabbats as outlined in the Wheel of the Year are attributed to the Middle Pillar, and bring balance between the outer pillars.

The Charge Of The Goddess

Written by Doreen Valiente

*Whenever ye have need of anything,
once in the month and better it be when the moon is full,
then shall ye assemble in some secret place,
and adore the spirit of me,
who am Queen of all witches.*

*There shall ye assemble,
ye who are fain to learn all sorcery,
yet have not won its deepest secrets;
to these will I teach all things that are as yet unknown.*

*And ye shall be free from slavery;
and as a sign that ye be truly free,
you shall be naked in your rites;
and ye shall dance, sing, feast, make music and love,
all in my praise.*

*For mine is the ecstasy of the spirit,
and mine also is joy on earth;
for my law is love unto all beings.*

*Keep pure your highest ideals;
strive ever towards them,
let nothing stop you or turn you aside.
For mine is the secret door which
opens upon the Land of Youth,
and mine is the cup of the wine of life,
and the Cauldron of Cerridwen,
which is the Holy Vessel of Immortality.
I am the gracious Goddess,
who gives the gift of joy unto the heart of man.*

*Upon earth,
I give the knowledge of the spirit eternal;
and beyond death,
I give peace, and freedom,
and reunion with those who have gone before.*

*Nor do I demand sacrifice;
for behold, I am the Mother of all living,
and my love is poured out upon the Earth.*

*I am the beauty of the green earth,
and the white moon among the stars,
and the mystery of the waters,
and the desire of the heart of man.*

*Call unto thy soul, arise, and come unto me.
For I am the soul of Nature,
who gives life to the Universe.
From me all things proceed,
and unto me all things must return;
and before my face, beloved of gods and of men,
let thine innermost divine self be enfolded,
in the rapture of the infinite.*

*Let my worship be within the heart that rejoicest,
for behold, all acts of love and pleasure are my rituals.
Therefore, let there be beauty and strength,*

*power and compassion, honor and humility,
mirth and reverence within you.*

*And thou who thinketh to seek for me,
know thy seeking and yearning shall avail thee not,
unless thou knoweth the mystery;
that if that which thou seekest thou findest not within thee,
thou wilt never find it without thee.*

*For behold, I have been with thee from the beginning;
and I am that which is attained at the end of desire.*