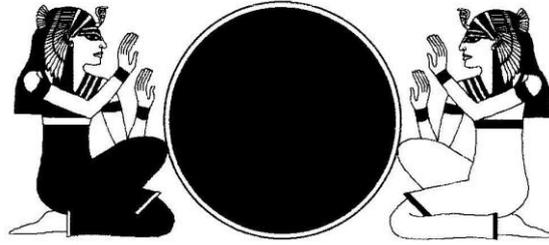


Temple of the Dark Moon



The Triple Goddess

Frances Billinghamurst (© March 2003)

One major aspect of the Great Goddess is that of the Triple Goddess. Trinities of the Goddess can be found in various cultural mythologies such as the three Norns of the Norse, and both the Moira and Erinnyes which are found in Greek mythologies. According to ancient Irish myth, when the Milesians arrived on the shores of the country they later named Eire, and began to make their way to Tara (the seat of sovereignty), they came across three aspects of the Goddess of Sovereignty - Bandha, Eriu and Fodha. When their poet Amergin promised Eriu that Ireland would bear her name as its first and only name, and she, in turn, declared Ireland to belong the Milesians until the end of time. Even in Hinduism, a specific distinction is made between separate aspects of the Great Goddess, the "MahaDevi", these being Sarasvati, Lakshmi and Kali.

In modern Paganism, the Triple Goddess is more often considered to be a personification of the Moon whereby the triplicity corresponds with three of the four Moon phases*. The youthful Virgin or Maiden Goddess represents the Waxing phase; the Mother Goddess is the Full Moon; and the Crone (or Hag) represents the Waning phase of the Moon. In this instance, three Goddesses are related under one aspect of the Great Goddess. For example, the Greek Goddess Artemis is often perceived as the Virginal huntress who is associated with the Waxing Moon, and who rules the Earth. Selene is the Mother aspect of the Goddess who is associated with the Full Moon and who rules the sky. Finally completing

* The fourth phase of the Moon where she does not appear in the sky is often referred to as the Dark Goddess. This aspect of the Goddess although sometimes similar to the Crone, can also appear as a Maiden and Mother Goddess. The late Shekhinah

the triplicity is Hecate, the Crone, who is associated with the Waning and Dark Moon, and rules the Underworld. It is interesting to note that when these three Greek Goddesses are used in this manner, the Triple Goddess is not only perceived as a Lunar Goddess but also the ruler of the three worlds – the Heavens, Earth and the Underworld. This aspect is reflected in the *Garland of Laurell*, a poem by 15th century English poet John Skelton:

*“Diana in the leaves green,
Luna that so bright doth sheen,
Persphone in Hell.”*

In modern Paganism, one reason for the possible popularity of the Triple Goddess is that She represents all aspects of the female life cycle. The freedom and independence of youth, the joys and sorrows of motherhood, and the wisdom and independence of old age, which return when we are free of the obligations of family. Modern society has tended to venerate the young and the beautiful and to neglect and devalue other aspects of womanhood.

The Triple Goddess is often depicted as both sexual and a mother. These two aspects have been divorced in the nearest Western equivalent to the Goddess, that of the Virgin Mary of the Catholic Church. This leads to a denigration of the life of the body, which can be damaging for both women and men. The original meaning of the word “virgin”, however, is not necessarily in a non-sexual sense, but in the sense of not owned. It is this original meaning that is meant when referring to the Virgin Goddess.

The Mother aspect of the Triple Goddess is represented by the Full Moon, or the Earth. Often this aspect of the Goddess is seen as Gaea, the Earth itself, and is thought of as the Great Mother - the Divine Feminine which gives birth to us, nourishes and sustains us and in which we finally find our rest and rebirth. This aspect of the Goddess, although suppressed by the Christian Church, persisted throughout the Medieval period amongst scholars and others who were still orientated to the ways of ancient Paganism. In a 12th century English herbal, for example, the Goddess is hymned as:

*Earth, Divine Goddess, Mother Nature,
Who dost generate all things
And bringest forth ever anew the Sun
Which Thou hast given to the nation;*

Mountainwater referred to the Dark Goddess as the “Dark Maiden” who is described as the sorceress or mystical aspect of the Great Goddess. Often, however people relate the Crone aspect of the Great Goddess also relates to the dark phase of the Moon.

*Guardian of sky and sea and of all Gods and powers;
 Through thy influence all Nature is hushed and sinks to sleep ...
 Again, when it pleases Thee,
 Thou sendest forth the glad daylight
 And nuturest life with Thine eternal surety;
 And when the spirit of humankind passes,
 To Thee it returns.
 Thou indeed art rightly named Great Mother of the Gods;
 Victory is Thy Divine name.
 Thou art the source of the strength of peoples and Gods;
 Without Thee nothing can either be born or made perfect;
 Thou art mighty, Queen of the Gods.
 Goddess, I adore Thee as Divine,
 I invoke Thy name;
 Vouchsafe to grant that which I ask of Thee,
 So shall I in return give thank to Thy Godhead,
 With the faith that is Thy due.*

The last aspect of the Triple Goddess is the Wise Woman, the Crone or Hag, who is the keeper of the Mysteries. The Crone Goddess symbolises our own inner wisdom, but also the elders who, in a tribal society, were the living repositories of the history and lore of that tribe. Their role was essential to the successful functioning of society and age had an honoured place.

On common error that people often tend to make when first coming across the Triple Goddess is relating human years to the various aspects. While the Virgin or Maiden aspect of the Goddess is more often than not depicted as a youthful young woman, it does not mean that someone of a more mature age cannot associate with this youthfulness. It is an increasingly common today to see people over 50 years of age enjoying freedom and life in a way they have never experienced before. Likewise, with the pressures of modern living and the breakdown of what is deemed the “traditional” family unit, it is not unusual for children to be stepping into the role of the Mother Goddess by looking after younger siblings. The different aspects of the Triple Goddess can therefore be experienced at whatever age we find ourselves at.

Why does the Triple Goddess have such modern appeal? Through the phases of the Moon, and the cycles of our own lives, we can see three distinct aspects of the Great Goddess. To know her in these different ways allows us a deeper insight into the Divine Feminine as a whole. We may look into Her many faces, and see some that resemble our own. We may feel her changing rhythms, and know more about our inner changes, from Moon phase to

Moon phase, and throughout the course of our years. Each aspect of the Great Goddess lives within us. Each brilliant face of the Great Goddess can be seen in the vibrant expressions of Her natural world!

About the Author:

Frances first connected with the Divine Feminine in the late 1980s. This connection was strengthened in 1993 when during a Wiccan rite known as "Drawing Down the Moon" the great Egyptian Goddess Isis made her presence felt.

Since that time Frances has continued to strengthen her personal relationship with the Divine Feminine - the Ancient Matriarch - the Goddess. Now Frances is drawn to share her knowledge and experience with others in order to assist them to re-connect with this ancient, yet powerful force.

Frances regularly writes for *Insight*, Australia's number one spiritual lifestyle magazine, with her articles also appearing in over 10 separate publications, including *Spellcraft*, *The Cauldron*, *Circle* and the Llewellyn's *Witch's Calendar*. She has further essays in a number of anthologies including *The Faerie Queens*, *Unto Herself: A Devotional Anthology for Independent Goddesses*, and *Memento Mori*. Her first book should be available from September 2012.

In 2007, Frances formed **The Goddess House**, a physical shrine where monthly devotional services and healing circles occur. These services are open to both men as well as women.

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More information about **The Goddess House** can be obtained by visiting <http://thegoddesshouse.blogspot.com>, emailing Frances at frances@templedarkmoon.com, or writing to PO Box 2451, Salisbury Downs SA 5108.