

# *Attunement to the Great Goddess*

by Ayesha Foot



The most important aspect of preparing to lead Dances inspired by the goddess or divine feminine is to dance them with an experienced leader, for attunement is caught, not taught. It is one's own body that is the teacher. When leading a Dance it is also important to remember that the experience of the participants may exceed one's own, so one should take care not to limit this by telling them what they should feel. Each person's attunement enhances that of the whole circle.

There is little in the way of sacred writings to guide our meditation, though there are many recent books both scholarly and popular which may help. So attunement to the goddess is largely a matter of experience. The dance leader may wish to set up a shrine to Her as a focus for meditation. Experience is personal, so I must speak personally. For me the first experience came through the Native Middle Eastern cycle. I began to move my hips in a new way, to feel the sound of Her name resonating within, and awaken to my own femininity, to re-member the feminine face of the Only Being.

Through the celebration of the earth and seasons and the phases of the moon, one becomes aware of a cyclical rhythm with which one's own body can identify. Observance of the lunar phases and walking the earth with awareness are important aspects of preparation. The element walks (Earth, Water, Air and Fire) are also helpful. Some Dances emphasise Her fiery aspect, *e.g.* Asherah, Hohkmah, and some Her watery aspect. An example is Kwan Zeon where 'the sweet dew of wisdom and compassion' is contained in the vessel she carries. More obviously, some are earthy.

Worship of the great Mother is one of the oldest forms of religion and we may feel that some of the chants and movements reawaken something we have always known.

This sense of a circular movement of energy, often of a somewhat chaotic swirling darkness is something that needs to be explored and accepted. It can be quite frightening. At one level, it seems that we have some memory of persecution of those who participated in this form of devotion. At another, one can feel overwhelmed by an energy that is not under control. If we can allow our vulnerability, this chaotic energy can be a source of creativity. It is helpful to use the sort of body prayers found in *Desert Wisdom* (1995 Neil Douglas-Klotz), particularly those associated with Hokhmah, Holy Wisdom.

There is a real longing within our dance circles and outside to honour and experience the feminine face of God. People disillusioned with patriarchy are looking for a new form of spiritual experience. In my hometown of Glastonbury, England there is a flourishing annual Goddess Conference and an ongoing training for priestesses and priests of the Goddess. She has so many aspects, the wisdom that comes from within and from the earth, the innocent sexuality of the maiden, the nurturing mother, the terrifying face of the crone with its reminder of our own mortality. Yet as we embrace the cyclical way of thinking we realise that to return to the womb of the earth is as much a part of life as birth. As one becomes sensitised, one is aware of Her constant presence. She can sometimes be a harsh teacher, yet She is a powerful protector, a loving mother and the raw destructiveness of the volcano.

"She [Hokhmah] is a tree of life for all who hold fast to Her." (Proverbs,*Old Testament*)