

WITCHCRAFT

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Seeking Initiation

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Seeking Initiation

by Maxine Sanders



Seeking initiation has always taken on the form of a quest, especially when magical mysteries are part of ones desire

Initiation is a well-used term in the Craft, but what is the process to achieve Initiation, and how do you go about it? As the Craft has become more popular, how do you find a teaching coven amongst all the 'Saturday night wand wavers' and other pretenders?

Initiation into the priesthood separates the priest from the laity; a priest is a person who is set apart from the laity by his/her work; and study of that priesthood's formulated inner workings of the universal law. The priest of the Craft has no more power than the non-initiate; however, he/she does develop specialized knowledge and experiences that make him or her behave and feel differently. To avoid the ever-present danger of earthly ego, it is interesting to consider the person working in the rice field, or the brain-damaged child, who may be more spiritually evolved than the initiated Priest. Their oneness with the life force may negate the need for spiritual training.

Seeking Initiation has always taken on the form of the quest, especially when magical mysteries are part of one's desire. Today, Initiation into the Craft is relatively easy to acquire; it is the magical training that is difficult to find.

Taking up Yoga and studying the art of meditation will aid the would-be initiate on his or her journey towards the priesthood. Today, we have the advantage of the New Age movement that constantly demands published information on all manner of occult subjects. With the knowledge and sometime rejection of certain modern day medicine, the avail-

ability of herbal knowledge is vast. The books written by today's New Age authors are rather a potluck gamble as to whether they contain correct or incorrect information. Published book-written information is usually only the writer's opinion, which may not necessarily be provable. Practicality makes joining the library sensible, as this will save vast amounts of money that could be otherwise wasted by purchasing many books that contain romantic rubbish and only the occasional worthy gem.

The first essential equipment that is needed by the seeker of knowledge is notepad and pen; the good occult student carries these vital magical tools with him or her at all times. The magical information that can be acquired from books and conversations with the most unlikely characters is enormous. Rather like the Scout, the witch should always be prepared to receive knowledge and preserve it for future study and practice. After a time of reading and reflection, spiritual curiosity drives the aspirant to make contact with one of the many pagan and New Age organisations. It is the desire to be with people of like mind that impels the student towards the religious bodies that, in turn, will give a sense of destination. A few years ago, the first step for many would have been the Theosophical Society. This is still an excellent way to discover truths that are not obviously connected to Witchcraft. It is usually at this point in the journey that many students discover their true vocation and the pitfalls to be surmounted on the way to initiation. There

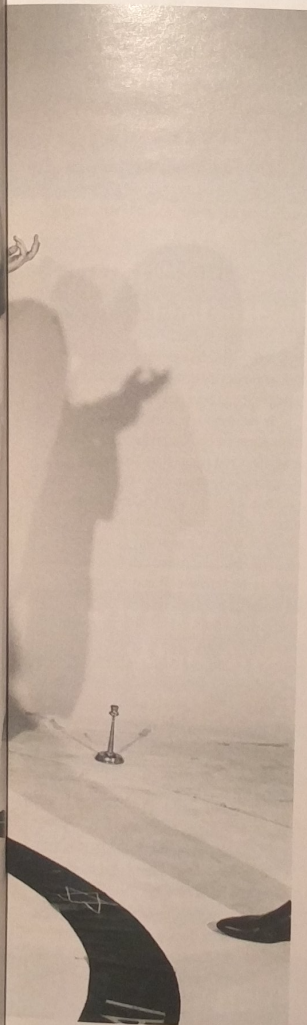
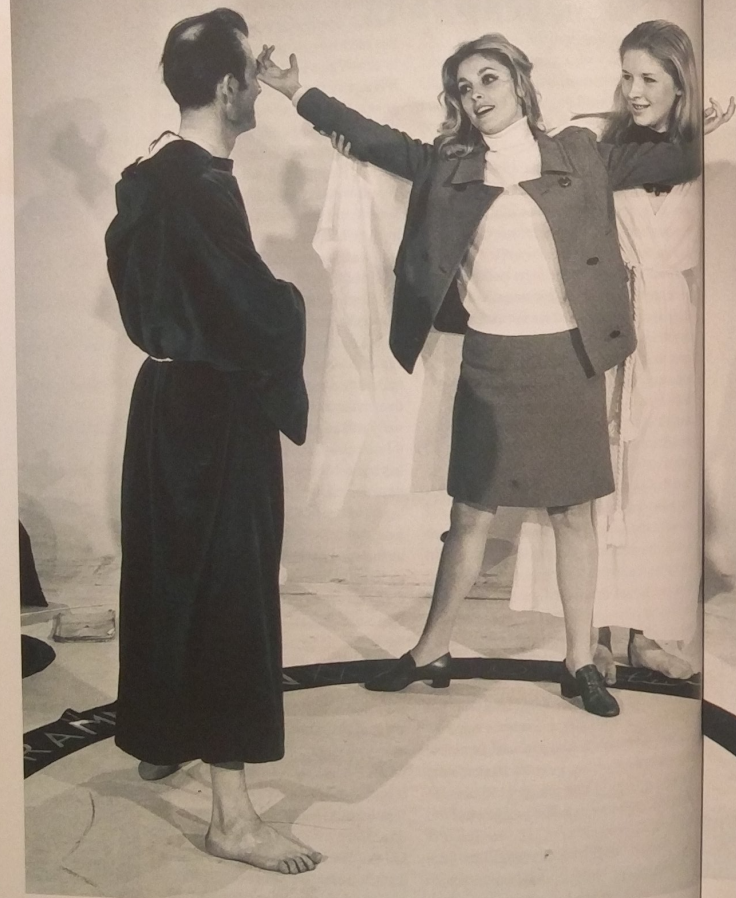
are establishments such as the Children of Artemis, Witchcraft and Wicca magazine, and various other magazines that can put you in touch with groups and moots, not all of which are terribly serious; nevertheless they do give a flavour of modern paganism.

The power of a vocation grows, and with that acceleration, the urgency to make contact with a mentor and Initiator becomes paramount. It is at this point that the likelihood of meeting with extraordinary men and women is most liable to happen. Unfortunately, I give them this title, not for their outstanding spiritual qualities but for their vastness of ego and their audacious use of the art of fascination. These tricksters are interesting to watch, dangerous to work with and generally useless in the finer workings of Wiccan magic and teachings. Sadly, they are numerous and far outweigh the limited number of good tutors. It is high impossible to avoid these 'demigods' in the search for initiation; they fool many aspirants. Their cover is usually that of absolute sincerity, apparent knowledge and being surrounded by followers who constantly kowtow. Beware the inflated ego that needs constant reassurance! It is with these people the danger lays; they present the possibility of initiation as easy and without effort. Promises of teaching and magical work are tantalising; it is at this point that the ability to be analytical is critical. Caught up in the sycophantic world of megalomania, it is so simple to be blinded by the fascination and absorbed by magical conversation. The essence of truth has been all but lost by these folk, who have an ability to ensnare the sincere student into a study that will lead them beyond initiation to a point of frustration. Certain groups in this category promise training and renege on that pledge after the first-degree ceremony. The newly made witch is put with others who are also in training and, to put it bluntly, are dumped without hope of advancement.

Occasionally the teacher will visit that circle to receive homage and adoration, but impart nothing more than their presence. From time to time students are eventually taken through a second-degree initiation but denied the third, thus enabling the so-called teacher to maintain absolute power over the group. Without this ceremony, the initiate cannot himself or herself go on to teach or initiate others. It is a sorry fact that the majority of open groups are run by initiates who failed in their own training. This is mainly due to impatience and wanting the imagined magical limelight before they have conquered the eight ways of magic. These are the different aspects of magic practised by the Witch, and must be learnt by those who wish to take their high priesthood degrees.

A good teacher wishes to pass on the knowledge that inspires the student to become more advanced than them. Earthly ego corrupts the role of a teacher. Lacking training and guidance, the student who does manage to attain the high priesthood sadly will continue the charade believing this to be correct; it is the only way he/she has known. Witchcraft is evolving and there are much-needed levels developing to accommodate the various needs in today's society. Nevertheless, wholesome initiates do not endanger the art or student by teaching on a vast scale; it is not possible to impart magical knowledge to more than a few students at any one time! Make the journey to the teacher an adventure of learning and listen to your inner voice; this voice is your intuition. The experience of meeting tricksters and those who are ego controlled is not bad; in fact, it is an excellent way of learning what not to be. First impressions are usually accurate; it is important not to be pressured, if you feel that this is happening, walk away and do not return. It is an unwritten magical law that Witches do not seek converts, nor do they coerce or use persuasive methods to entice the aspirant towards initiation.



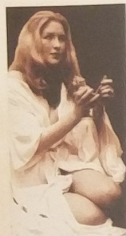


One of the commonest sayings used by bogus teachers is 'You are a natural healer' or 'you have a natural power'; flattery in these circumstances should be treated with mistrust.

Keeping a diary of all these meetings and their conversations will help to clarify and steady the sense of urgency that undoubtedly will have been fed by them. It is wise to meet as many Witches/occultists as possible. Some covens hold 'open evenings' or soirées to enable the curious and the seeker to make enquiries. These meetings are held in a relaxed atmosphere; it is hoped that guests bring wine or fruit juice! It is at these open evenings that all types of questions are expected, including those that may seem too simple, together with the bizarre and blunt. People are confused and bewildered by the terminology used by Witches; do not be afraid to ask the meaning of words such as Athame, Watchtowers or, "What is meant by working with an elemental or the elements?" "How intensive is the training and how often do you meet?" No matter how simplistic your query, do not be embarrassed. A good coven is thorough in its teaching and will welcome the opportunity to clarify Craft knowledge and describe ritual used by its priesthood. If you should ask a question that is denied an answer, supposedly due to it being a Craft secret, warning bells should ring loud and clear in your head. This is 'old hat' and no true teacher will fob you off in such a manner. If the person taking the evening is a true witch and is asked a question they do not know the reply to, they will say so and endeavour to find the explanation for you.

Visit as many groups as you can; all covens work independently from one another and vary in their working practices. The interpretation of the 'Book of Shadows' differs from group to group. The method and manner of ritual can depend on such simplicities as whether or not the coven works outside or indoors. The weather has a dramatic effect on the





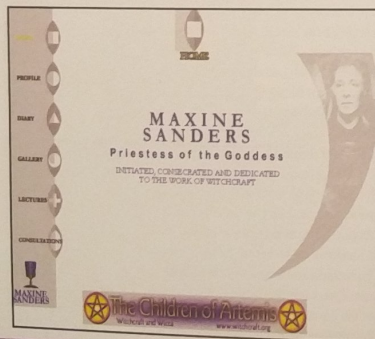
type of ritual practiced. I recollect moving from Manchester to London and thinking that the Southern Witches were marred. I had been used to working skylad on the moors in the middle of hard snowy winters and thinking nothing of it. Southerners would no more dream of working out in the snow than under water. I now have to agree with their sense of preservation; perhaps I became spoilt by the moderate climate in the South! This does not mean that I did not benefit from those arduous circles that attuned my senses. Some groups are temple based and work ceremonially, others work without ritual; nevertheless, they are just as effective in their heart magic. Each coven has its own way of teaching: some can demand as much as seven evenings a week of your time. This is extreme and extraordinarily heavy training; not many can take the pace. Other groups may just meet once a month and give training before or after the circle working. This would take a lifetime of basic training and is not recommended for the serious student. On average a good training coven will meet two to three times a week in the first year of initiation.

Homework that is tested on a regular basis is customary; be prepared to suffer writer's cramp as a great deal of time is spent with pen in hand. As much as the

method of training varies from group to group, so does the type of work engaged in. Ceremonial witches are, as the word suggests, rather grand in the way that their rituals are performed; other witches will only work skylad, no matter what the circumstance. Particular covens are rather free and abandoned in their manner of worship, often at the least opportunity gambolling off to the woods to dance, sing and make merry. Each coven will have a specific preference, such as the study of herbs, or the art of astral projection, magical dance and breath, astronomy, astrology, sound, colour; all of which can culminate into the art of weaving spells. By visiting different groups, it is possible to find the coven that works in a way that is suitable and beneficial for you.

When you have read the good recommended books and have found the group that you respond to, then is the time for you to reconsider your desire and vocation; once the step has been taken, there is no returning - 'Once a Witch, always a Witch'. It is at this point that a true and unbiased friend can help you to analyse the situation. It may be that no such trustworthy person exists in your life; it may also sound an incompatible suggestion but the parish priest or rabbi will give you some sound reasons as to why it is not a good idea to get involved with Witchcraft. All of these reasons are valid to him and worth consideration from you. Seek out an authority on the subject, someone who is no longer teaching and preferably well past the ego stage. They will give unbiased advice and many more reasons as to why it may not be such a good decision for you to follow a path that could endanger your future fulfilment. If your vocation is true, the path that led you to read this will continue to the initiator and will not be denied. It is your responsibility to find the right initiator/initiation. Trust in your inner voice and abide by its guidance.

Go to Maxine Sanders web site at www.maxinesanders.co.uk for more information on this influential Wiccan High Priestess



Witchcraft and Wicca



WITCHCRAFT & WICCA

Children of Artemis



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Witchcraft.org Web Site

One of the most popular and friendly Witchcraft/Wiccan web sites in the world

If you are interested in Witchcraft or Wicca and you have access to the web, then you must visit the Children of Artemis web site. There are discussion forums, chat rooms, free email, a free online members area, full members area, advice pages, Moon phases, vast links pages, a book shop, spell of the day, extensive art galleries, event pages, news, and much more. It really is a friendly oasis on the web.

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A high quality, glossy, full colour magazine, full of interesting articles on Witchcraft, illustrated with beautiful artwork and photos. A convenient small format, and is produced twice yearly. It costs just £3.25. Ask for the magazine at your local new age shop, or bookshop.



WITCHFEST 2004

November 5-7th 2004

Witchfest International 2004 the largest ever!

As a result of the spectacular popularity of the previous Witchfests, this years event will be held over three days. It starts on Friday evening with the Circus of Horrors, Saturday and Sunday will follow the usual Witchfest programme of talks, workshops, shopping, entertainment and great music from 10:00am until close. There are separate tickets available for each day. For more details visit www.witchfest.net

For Details please send a SAE to
BM Artemis, London, WC1N 3XX
(or visit <http://www.witchcraft.org>)

WITCHFEST

International 2004

The largest Witchcraft festival in the World, is to be held at the Fairfield Halls, Croydon, South London on November 6th & 7th 2004. Witchfest is now 2 days! From 10:00am to the Witching hour (midnight)

More talks and workshops than ever before, given by some of the most famous Witchcraft and Wiccan experts in the World. There are a strictly limited number of tickets available for each day, so book early to avoid disappointment

Maxine Sanders, Kate West, Dorothy Morrison
Fred Lamond, Cassandra Eason, R.J. Stewart
Teresa Moorey, Sorita and David Rankine
Ashleen O'Gaea, Kala Trobe, Anna Franklin
Lora O'Brien, Sheena Morgan, Tam Campbell
Rae Beth, Galatea, Liz Pilley and many more



Fantastic Entertainment

Saturday

Mediaeval Baebes

Carolyn Hillyer & Nigel
Shaw with Riven
Tim Wheater, Scary
Bitches, The Morrighan
Kitty Hudson
The Flaming Galahs

Sunday

All About Eve

Never The Bride
AntiProduct
Daughters of Elvin
Heather Alexander
Cat von Trapp
Galatea, SkinTrade

All speakers, workshops and entertainment are subject to change without notice
Please Note this event is not suitable for young children under 12 years of age



Event organised in conjunction with

Children of Artemis

Please see inside for details of what is happening on each day

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if you book before 31st Aug
2004, see form for details