



Witchcraft Basics

The Witches' Voice presents...

THE WITCHES' PENTACLE

The Pentacle, the symbol of Witchcraft, is a bold and fascinating statement about our place in the Universe. The pentagram represents an ancient concept that can be found in philosophical thought in both East and West. Although over 8,000 years old, the image of the pentagram is applicable in our modern world. The pentagram tells us that we have the ability to bring Spirit to Earth; this applies to every area of practical day-to-day living, as well as spiritual thought. The ability of bringing Spirit to Earth is what makes us whole.

THE STAR OF LIFE

THE ANCIENT POWER OF THE 5 POINT STAR IN A CIRCLE

A Historical and spiritual history of the Pentagram
by **Sharynne NicMacha**

Imagine the perfect apple, ripe and bursting with life. Sliced in half, it reveals a beautiful five-point symmetry—a star formed by the seeds inside. In fact, each of these five seeds may be seen to contain a symbolism of its own mirroring the spiritual aspects of this universal symbol: idea, sustenance, life, secret knowledge and the hidden mysteries within the earth. Why has this beautiful and potent emblem, the five-pointed star or pentagram, become such a misunderstood and stigmatized symbol in these times of re-emerging enlightenment?

In the tale of Adam and Eve, the apple signified hidden knowledge which was forbidden to human kind. Other early cultures encouraged holy and learned persons in their search for divine wisdom. For example, the Vedas state that the universe and ourselves are One, and that by realizing this and tapping into that Universal energy and state, we achieve wholeness and bliss. These concepts were known to many ancient civilizations. For most of the western culture, sacred knowledge was designated as the right of the One Deity only. It was considered heretical to study the Divine workings of the Universe. The apple signified that which we should not attempt to know, and many attempts over the centuries to obtain knowledge of the Universe (and therefore, ourselves) were suppressed. The pentagram in its modern guise as the pentacle was also a target of this subjugation.

For modern-day Pagans, the Pentacle contains many wonderful layers of symbolism.

The five points symbolize the four directions with the fifth point as the sanctity of Spirit, within and without. The circle around the star symbolizes unity and wholeness. It represents the quest for Divine Knowledge, a concept which is ancient in origin and universal in scope from the earliest written ritual texts in Babylonia, to the Celts, to the Native American traditions. Similar to other figures which are made of a single unbroken line, this symbol is used to mark off magical enclosures or ritual areas, especially when used for invocation of deities or spirit.

The pentagram is one of the most powerful and popular symbols used by many Neo-Pagans, including those involved in Wicca and Ceremonial Magic. In working magic, Pagans may draw the shape of the pentagram in the air with the athame, or sacred blade, sometimes in the four directions as part of the ritual. A physical pentacle in the form of a flat disc is often the a main feature of the altar and is a widely used ritual tool. The symbol is used to decorate magickal tools or items such as a chalice, cauldron, or the handle of the athame itself. For some it represents feminine energy relating to the Goddess and may be used to bind elemental spirits of the earth as well as to hold consecrated objects such as herbs, amulets and crystals. The spoken or chanted text of a spell or invocation may be repeated five times to help insure its effectiveness. (3, 5, 7, 9 and 13 being some of the most commonly used repetitions in this context). The pentacle is worn both ornamentally and symbolically by many Pagans for protection and to signify that they are involved in the world of magick and divine wisdom.

It is interesting to note that five-fold symmetries are rarely found in non-organic life forms but are uniquely inherent to life, as in the form of the human hand, a starfish, flowers, plants and many other living things. This pattern of five exists even down to a molecular level. Five, therefore, embodies the form and formation of life, the very essence of life.

The pentagram is a very widespread sacred symbol used since ancient times in many areas including Egypt, India, Persia and Greece. Almost all cultures had a five-fold symbol, which was very important to their religious and spiritual life. The sacred nature of five, the important nature of "five-ness" is amply attested to in Celtic tradition from which much of modern Paganism is derived. Five appears in numerous Celtic contexts: Ireland had five great roads, five provinces and five paths of the law. The fairy folk counted by fives, and the mythological figures wore five fold cloaks.

In the ancient Irish tale, "Cormac's Cup of Gold", the hero "saw a royal fortress with four houses in it, and a bright well with nine ancient hazels growing over it. In the well, were five salmon who ate the nuts that dropped from the purple hazels, and sent the husks floating down the five streams that flowed therefrom. The sound of the streams was the sweetest music...The spring was the Well of Knowledge, and the five streams the five senses through which knowledge is obtained. No one will have knowledge who drinks not a draught out of the well itself or out of the streams. Those who are skilled in many arts drink from both the well and the streams."

In another part of the world, around 500 B.C.E.(Before Current Era) lived Pythagoras, an unparalleled scholar, teacher and leader renowned for his knowledge of arithmetic, music, government and sacred geometry. He tapped into the divine mysteries, and, like the ancient Celts, (and many Neo-Pagans) learned from and existed comfortably between both worlds.

Pythagoras set up a school where he taught many people, both male and female, who flocked to him in pursuit of divine knowledge. Unfortunately, the school was suppressed in a brutal fashion for political reasons. After this, his followers and the knowledge itself were forced underground, Pythagoreans considered the five-pointed star to be a symbol of life and of the divine human. Therefore, it became the secret sign of the pythagorean followers, "so that they may know each other,"

The Pythagorean schools continued on in secret and from this line of descent came the Gnostic and Hermetic Mystery Schools (which contained both men and women and were Christian to varying degrees), as well as the Masonic Guilds, expert stone-masons initiated into Mystery Schools learning which included sacred geometry. Even though the Church considered the Masons to be quite heretical, they hired them to build the most sacred structures in Europe- the great cathedrals-many of which contained pentagonal or five-fold symmetries. Parallel with Masonic culture were the alchemists of medieval Europe, scientists, philosophers and magicians, both male and female, who studied the mysteries of the Universe. These societies held onto this five-fold symbol which kept its positive, ancient attributes and signified hidden, luminous knowledge.

This ancient wisdom lived on underground through the mystery schools and other sources and continued throughout the Middle Ages up until modern times. However, because this Divine knowledge threatened the authority and power of the Church, those who pursued it and the symbols they used were severely persecuted.

The star of life, which had been a symbol of divine illumination, became stigmatized as a sign of heretical thought and eventually as something evil. These negative attributes were further reinforced by the use of the upside down pentagram by some satanic cults who are probably more "Anti-Christians" than "Pagans". as their beliefs are not those of most Neo-Pagan groups. Modern media continues to distort the meaning of the pentagram by showing it in both its upright and inverted position, yet portraying all who use it as evil.

In spite of this difficult history, the symbol has survived, and continues to be used by those who uphold the search for divine knowledge. The sacred pentagram maintains its many wonderful and magickal ancient attributes and is still the symbol of life it has always been.

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THE ELEMENTAL PENTACLE

THE ANCIENT POWER OF THE 5 POINT STAR IN A CIRCLE

The Pentacle, the most famous symbol of Witchcraft is a bold and fascinating statement about our place in the Universe. When the pentacle is drawn or written, the image created is called a pentagram. The pentagram represents an ancient concept that can be found in philosophical thought in both East and West. Although over 8,000 years old, the image of the pentagram is applicable in our modern world. The pentagram tells us that we have the ability to bring Spirit to Earth; this applies to every area of practical day-to-day living, as well as spiritual thought. The ability of bringing Spirit to Earth is what makes us whole.

In Craft rituals, the pentacle is a round disk inscribed with a pentagram and placed upon on the altar. The disk can be made of many different materials.

In more dangerous times, the pentacle was crafted from disposable materials such as clay or dough. To be caught in possession of a pentacle in those days could very well endanger your life.

Nowadays, pentacles are crafted in metals such as copper, brass, silver or gold. Many Witches make their own from stained glass or by etching stones or wood. The pentacle can also be personalized by adding appropriate astrological symbols, runes and other sigils (magical symbols) that have special meaning to the practitioner.

Many Witches wear a pentacle pendant or ring as a sign of their religion or as an amulet or talisman. The pentacle crafted from silver represents Moon energy and psychic forces. The same symbol made in gold represents the Sun energies of power and strength. Many pentacles come with embedded stones which can represent birth months or a particular energy that the wearer wants to attract.

During magical operations, the pentagram can be drawn in the air by the athame or sword. When drawn a certain way, it is used to either invoke or banish energies. Used on the altar, it becomes a focal point to draw in and send out the intentions of the spell or working. The simplest spells of this kind are those involving candle magic. A candle of the appropriate color is charged and placed on the pentacle.

Traditionally, each of the five angles has been attributed to the five metaphysical elements of the ancients:

EARTH: (lower left hand corner) represents stability and physical endurance.

FIRE: (lower right hand corner) represents courage and daring.

WATER: (upper right hand corner) represents emotions and intuition.

AIR: (upper left hand corner) represents intelligence and the arts.

SPIRIT: (at the topmost point) represents the All and the Divine.

The Circle around the star represents the God-Goddess; it refracts and reflects all light, bringing to the wearer total intelligence, universal wisdom and protection.

The origins of the pentagram go back to remotest historical antiquity. As far back as pre-Babylonian Sumer, it has been venerated by many civilizations. To the Jewish peoples, it symbolically designated the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses. It has survived under a variety of titles, such as "The Druid's Root" and "The Witches Star".

To the followers of Pythagoras, it was called "The Pentalpha" being composed of five interlaced A's or Alphas. The Alpha being the first word of the alphabet, we can perhaps view it as showing forth unity in the midst of multiplicity. The individual as part of the Whole.

To ceremonial magicians, the points can represent various elemental energies, spirits or deities.

It is the ruling of the higher mind over the lower elements of our being. It signals the awakening of cosmic consciousness and the beginnings of our own human psyche moving beyond the realms of physical form and the perceptions limited to the five senses. It allows the infinite possibilities that exist within the Universe and frees us to explore and to grow.

This becomes a graphic portrayal of Spirit ruling over the five elements. When the pentagram is placed within a circle, its energy is focused and directed. The pentagram upright, to those of spiritual perception, represents the redemption of Spirit from matter by ruling over it.

Used inverted, with the top point pointed downward, it represents a second or third degree status in some traditional groups. Many of these groups have since substituted a triangle form for the same degrees because of the association of the inverted form of the pentacle with Satanism and black magic.

The number five is attributed to the influence of Mars. Thus some Witches think of the five pointed star within the circle as force or power contained and controlled by divine wisdom.

This just in from Betterself@aol.com: (The Pentacle when hung up-side-down), "The Eastern Star uses the pentagram as it's symbol, and up-side down. The Eastern Star are not devil worshipers, either. They're the women's group/reflection of the Masons, which require a belief in God, etc. They're international and are known for their humanitarianism.