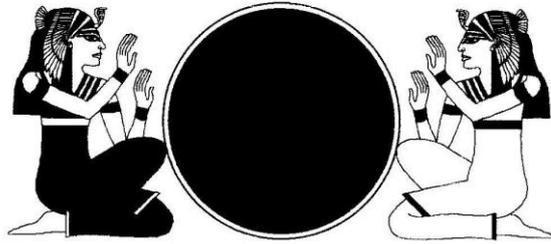


Temple of the Dark Moon



Athena: Greek Warrior Goddess

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*“Grey-eyed one, I sing of you, wisest and most beautiful
relentless Athena, protector of cities, strong-armed and fair.
From his head the great god birthed you,
Dressed in golden armour and bearing a sharp spear.
The holy mountains shook when you were born,
And the earth quaked, and the sea’s dark waves broke against the land.
Even the sun stopped in astonishment at this sight,
This goddess, fresh-born and strong.
Hail to you, Athena, may I never live
Without the shield of your protection.”*
- Homeric Hymn

While within Greek mythology the Supreme God of Mt Olympus, Zeus, was known for siring many children, it was the Goddess Athena who was his favourite. According to popular legend, fearful that the child she was carrying would surpass him in strength, Zeus swallowed the ocean nymph Metis. Shortly after doing this, he developed an intolerable headache and ordered Hephaestus (the God of Smithery) to split open his skull with an axe. From this wound sprang Athena, “fully armed and brandishing a sharp javelin”. She shouted a triumphant cry of victory which the earth was said to have echoed with a terrible sound, and the sea trembled as its dark waters rose.



Robert Graves mentioned in his *The Greek Myths*, however, that earlier myths depict Athena as hailing from Libya and whose worship came to Greece by the way of Crete around 4,000 BCE. Greek writer Hesiod relates Metis to being a Titan who later became the consort of Zeus

when his cult gained dominance. Whatever the case may be, Athena is certainly not a meek and mild Goddess.

Although she was the Greek Goddess of war, Athena preferred to settle disputes by reasoning. However, whenever she was involved in combat, she was unbeatable. Aside from the warrior aspect, Athena was also known as a Goddess of many other things including the arts, (where she was patron of sculptors, spinners and weavers) as well as of prudent intelligence. She was connected with industry, working women, the patron of architects, as well as horse and oxen. The owl is one of her totem animals, signifying her wisdom.

Athena is said to have competed against Poseidon, the God of the Oceans to be the patron Deity of the then nameless city-state of Athens. When the people had to choose between a spring of salty water (Poseidon's gift) or an olive tree, naturally they chose Athena's olive tree, which subsequently formed the foundation for their economic security over many centuries. In gratitude of the olive tree, the Athenians built the Parthenon (from *parthenos* meaning "maiden" or "virgin") on the Acropolis and during a festival held in honour of Athena, the "Panathenea", olive branches were carried to the Acropolis for the Goddess. It was at the Parthenon that the sculptor Pheidias made a 440 foot high statue of Athena known as the "Palladium", so named after Pallas, a young maiden Goddess whom Athena accidentally killed whilst engaged in combat training. In remorse, the Goddess adopted her ill-fated friend's name, hence sometimes being known as "Palla Athena".

Athena was renown for guarding her accomplishments with much jealousy and allowing no one to surpass her. When, on the island of Lydia, a girl named Arachne boasted that her own weaving skills equalled those of the Goddess, Athena challenged her. At the conclusion of the competition, when the Goddess was unable to find any imperfection in the tapestry that Arachne had woven, she was overcome with such jealousy that she turned the girl into a spider. Another version of the story implies that Athena was insulted with the tapestry that Arachne had woven as it depicted the lives of all the Gods, including their imperfections.

Working with Athena

In ancient Greece women of Athens were said to have worked together for some nine months to make a new peplos, or woollen robe, for the statue housed in the Parthenon. For this mini ritual, you need to either make a shawl or scarf from a piece of fabric or obtain a ready made one. You can then decorate the shawl or scarf with beads, sequins or other objects that you feel drawn to use.

You will also need to find a statue or picture of Athena to use as a focal point on your altar. One can be photocopied from a mythology book or your local museum or art gallery may even have a postcard of Pheidias' masterpiece. Alternatively, you could use an image of the owl (a symbol of Athena's wisdom), a serpent (divine feminine energy) or a small branch from an olive tree.

When working with Athena, it is important to decide on what aspect of her you wish to work with – are you wanting the aid of the Warrior Goddess, the inspiration and foresight of the Creativity Goddess or her divine wisdom and intellect? When you have decided which aspect of the Goddess Athena you wish to work with, sit before your altar, with the shawl/scarf draped over your head and call the Goddess to you. A simple way to do this is by repeating her name slowly, over and over, using it like a mantra. Each time you repeat her name, visualise the Goddess before standing before you.

When you have finished chanting the mantra, feel the energy of this powerful Goddess around you and ask her to assist you in your creative aspirations or whatever else you desire she assist you with.

Thank the Goddess you are working with and you may like to leave her an offering, such as a feather you have found to represent her wisdom and intellect, or a particular crystal that you feel is appropriate. Carefully put away your peplos for it is to be worn only when you need Athena's energy.

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.