

The Pentacle of The Great Turning

The Great Work of these Turning Times

By Riyana Moon

Around the world, different ancient cultures have prophesied a time of great change: the sensation of time speeding up, mother earth becoming less and less able to support life, species going extinct by the thousands, the whole world being torn asunder by greed, ignorance, and lethargy. And in the midst of this, a great awakening – a turning, a rite of passage into a new, greater consciousness.

Ecospiritualist Thomas Berry calls this evolution of consciousness the “Great Work” of our era.

Joanna Macy, an elder of the Buddhist tradition and anti-nuclear activist for over thirty years, calls it the Great Turning. “It’s the essential adventure of our time: the shift from the industrial growth society to a life-sustaining civilization.”

HEALING THE EARTH

For witches and other people who practice daily to root down and connect deeply with the Earth, we sometimes feel our own hearts and spirits torn apart by the devastation of our mother. Some of us feel the confusion of the many creatures whose homes and families are dying like a daze we can never quite shake off. Still others are haunted by the sorrowful songs of the dammed rivers and the salmon who cannot find their way back to their ancestral homes.

Healing the Earth and learning to live harmoniously with her ways as a culture may be the Great Work of our time, but it is hard work. Activists get burned out, earth-healers become

Desire
Surrender
Transformation
Solidarity
Manifestation

encumbered by their own wounds, and dreamers close their eyes to the visions they see, because it’s simply too much at times.

The Pentacle of The Great Turning is a tool that was created through a community visioning process by Free Activist Witchcamp 2007 to honor, inspire, and rebirth this Great Work. The points of the Pentacle were harvested from dreamings on Brigid Eve, visioning under the full moon, and, of course a series of seemingly endless consensus meetings, from which we emerged with a true witches’ tool: one that paradoxically works inwardly and outwardly at the same time – which is precisely the magic needed to bring about the awakening we dream of.

This pentacle, the work, begins in Desire. This is Desire in its multi-faceted, bright and shadowy sense: our deep, loving connection to the Mother, our irresistible attraction to life, our hunger for ecstasy, our yearning to know Her in our bodies, our hearts, our souls.

It is through deepening our connection with Her and with our love for life that we can viscerally understand the extent of the destruction facing our planet, and the intensity of the coming storms if we do not find another way of living.

The sheer enormity of what we have done and what we must learn to do in order to survive and ensure the survival of our brother and sister beings is overwhelming to think about – nuclear waste with a half-life over 300 million generations long, 50% of all species disappearing, an island of plastic waste twice the size of Texas floating in the Pacific Ocean. It’s tempting to turn away, to return to the much smaller and more manageable details of our private lives, but that’s not how the Great Turning is woven.

All we can do is Surrender to the fears that threaten to close our hearts like a stone, the sorrow that makes us feel brittle like dried leaves, the rage that thunders against the hollows of our stomachs like sticks, the apathy that feels like empty death. We Surrender into faith. We may not know if there’s anything we can do to the destruction in time, but we choose to try to do something about it rather than let our worry of personal failure hold us back. We open to the luminous, bright light of adventure.

In that opening, an amazing Transformation blossoms. Some traditions call this blossoming the inklings of enlightenment; some call it becoming indigenous, rewilding, or finding the primal self; some call it

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Great Turning

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coming through the dark night of the soul into knowing the love of the divine. In the many names and forms of this Transformation, there is a common thread: we open up to the great web of life as our selves, we see how this web holds us, is within us, and that we are of it. We are nature, we are the land, we are nature and the land healing herself.

From this knowing, we can move into true Solidarity with all of our relations. Lila Watson, Aboriginal activist, once famously said, "If you have come to help me you are wasting my time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us struggle together." In the Great Turning, we extend Watson's insight beyond the boundary of species lines to include the salmon and the hazel trees, the orcas and the wild bunch grasses, the stray cats in our neighborhoods and the scrub jays that drive us crazy at 7AM with their scratchy cawing. We reach out with

our hearts and prayers to listen to the wisdom of all beings, knowing that we need the voices of all of them in order to create truly meaningful, culture-altering, save-the-world solutions.

The last point on the Pentacle is Manifestation: not only with the communal manifestation we are creating – The Great Turning – but also the unique callings of our individual lives that make up our own personal part of it. This brings us back to Desire – what we want to do with our lives to help the healing of the earth, the work that we are yearning to do, the visions we long to bring into fruition.

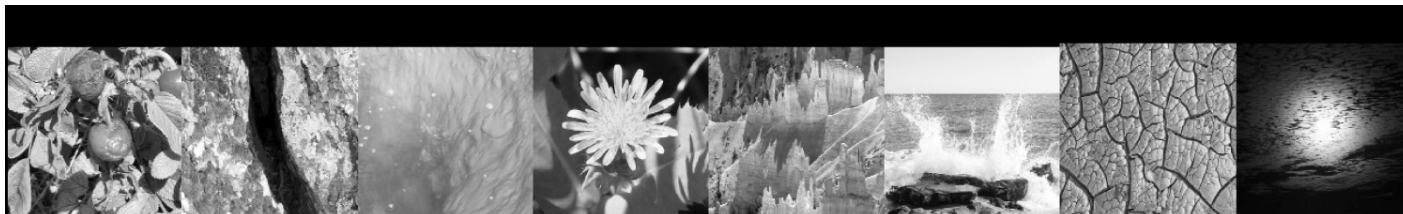
For some of us, a big part of the work of the Great Turning is our activism, whether in the streets or in community centers. For others, our work is as healers and artists and ritualists working to change the consciousness beneath the actions that are so detrimental to the planet. Still others are crafting new initiatives and new systems for our culture, finding visionary ways to manifest the Great Turning in the here and now. Most of us dance between

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— Joanna Macy

many different spheres of the work, following our hearts and minds and the wise words of our guides to find the right road for us. In all of these places, the points of the Pentacle of the Great Turning can help keep us grounded, inspired, and connected in the wider context of our work. May it be so.

Riyana adores the magic of song, women's blood mysteries, herbalism, and incorporating the magic of other mystical traditions into her work. She has taught at Free Activist Witchcamp, Teen Earth Magic, Witchlets in the Woods, and within her local community in the Bay Area and in Black Rock City, Nevada.



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