



now ripe for the harvest. Autumn, by its very nature, is flowing, purifying, healing, soothing, nurturing and loving.

The Goddess is in her Mother phase, the animals are preparing for hibernation and the approaching winter, and the land is preparing the fruits of its labor for harvest. It is a time for acknowledging that the end of the cycle of growth is fast approaching – that all that is born must also die, and eventually, perhaps, be reborn. It is a time for personal growth, for realisation and personal illumination before the time of approaching darkness.

According to the teachings of the Wheel of Life, during autumn we are symbolically standing in the west – the place of the setting sun, and the home of Zephyrus, the West Wind, and the Goddess Aphrodite and the God Neptune. It is twilight, or dusk, on an energetic level, and while standing in the west we are in the phase of life dedicated to parenthood, the gaining of maturity, and the knowledge that all the wisdom we seek is instinctively within us.

Autumn is feminine and receptive in nature, as is the calming, inward energies of the west. During Autumn we are encouraged to explore our emotions,

our feelings, and our concepts of love.

Autumn tests our courage and daring, our intuition, and the subconscious mind by raising questions of fertility, awareness of the womb, of healing, purification, pleasure, friendship, partnership, and our immediate happiness. As autumn is the time when the animals start to consider hibernation, our sleep patterns and the rate at which we dream are also factors at this time.

Fall is also an excellent period to investigate the psychic planes and to begin communicating with the spirit realms, because at this time, with its association with the west and the moon, the veils between the worlds are rapidly thin-

ning. Vision quest and traditional style journey work are best done during autumn as it is a fine time for the investigation of the inner self, inner knowing, self-healing and inner vision, one's sense of security, sympathy and love.

WINTER: South

According to the teachings of ancient earth wisdom, we symbolically visit the south as a grandmother or a grandfather – an elder with much knowledge to share and wisdom to pass down to the younger members of the family. South on the Wheel of Life speaks of great wisdom, abundance, prosperity and wealth. It can be relied upon to be stable, solid and dependable. It is represented by the element of Earth and all percussion instruments, such as the drum and hitting sticks. South is seen as the place of the greatest darkness, as is winter, the season energetically associated with the south.

Winter is feminine and receptive in nature. She teaches those who are ready to listen the lessons of personal and physical growth and the surrendering of the self-will, of sustenance, material gain, prosperity and abundance, creativity, fertility, birth and death, inner silence, compassion,

grounding, mystery, industry, personal possessions, conservation, business and employment, stability, success, healing and strength, all of which are lessons of maturity and wisdom and often learnt best by experience, hardship and, at times, loss.

Winter, governed by the Earth spirits that inhabit the interior of the earth – the gnomes, dwarfs and trolls – is represented on the Wheel of Life as the period in our life when we have reached advanced age, and it is, on a symbolic level, midnight, when the sky is at its darkest.

During winter, the veils between the worlds are at their thinnest and it is a time of great transformation. The seeds shed during the fertile months begin to germinate under the ground, even if the earth above lies dormant, frozen and barren. They are preparing to burst through the surface of the land as new life and the crops of the new year, completing the great cycle of life of birth, death and rebirth.

The Goddess is in her Crone stage, when she realises her purpose and is able to see and understand better the complexities of life due to her wisdom and experience.

The lessons learned during winter leave us complete and whole, with nothing left to do but to return to the east, and the freshness of spring, to start our life over again. We can shed our robes as an elder in winter to be reborn as the infant in the spring to relearn life's lessons all over, or to polish up on the lessons learned last time.

We visit the four seasons physically, emotionally and spiritually many times over countless lifetimes, and each time we so do we find greater harmony within ourselves, and all the things around us. We come to better understand the significance of life and the four sacred gifts of power – illumination, innocence, introspection and wisdom – with the hope of becoming a more compassionate, prudent, confident, healthy person.

* Reprinted from the book *Animal Dreaming*, by Scott Alexander King. Available from Circle of Stones, at: <www.circleofstones.com.au>

