

SHAMANIC WOMANCRAFT

Reclaiming Feminine Wisdom through Reconnection with the Women's Mysteries

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It's a full moon and I'm sitting on an island in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of France, far from my home, but near to the lands of my ancestors and ancestors. I have come from a circle of 18 women, held deep in a magical forest in Brittany rich with the legends of Vivienne and Morgaine of yesteryears. We sat together for five days during our Shamanic Womancraft Retreat. The week before, I sat in a circle of 12 women in the woods where Druids live and practice their arts in England. The women with whom I spent these last weeks have all met my work through the internet, via my websites, and facebook pages, also through my books and now sitting together face to face, we meet each other, all students, all teachers, all sisters.

I am a woman, of 55 years, from Australia. I am a Mother, Grandmother, Partner of my Beloved, Independent Midwife, Shamanic Midwife, Witch, Priestess and Teacher. I have founded a school in Australia called The School of Shamanic Womancraft and I share the teachings I have had and the wisdom I have gained. The basis of what I teach is the wisdom of the cycles of the Earth, our life, the Moon, the spiritual practise of menstruation, conscious rites of passage, the shamanic nature of all this and how it connects us to the Divine Feminine. And more than anything what I 'do' is help women remember what they already know. Usually though, this knowledge is buried deep within them and they have forgotten it. And I see my role, as in the words of my dearly 'departed' teacher, mentor and friend Jeannine Parvati Baker, is to help women 're-member' themselves, that is - to put themselves back together.

We live in a world that is dominated by a patriarchal culture. The feminine is not valued and in many cases is oppressed. Women are often disconnected from their bodies and the wisdom they hold and men are lost in knowing what it means to be a man. Pornography influences almost everything, women's bodies are used in advertising to sell things ranging from cars to ice cream, and we are even seeing the sexualisation of childhood. Aging is not honoured, plastic surgery and hormone replacement therapy are encouraged within the mainstream to keep women looking young. Removal of pubic hair is encouraged and a generation of boys are growing up not knowing what a mature female looks like. The only age who are without pubic hair are prepubescent, what are we encouraging here?

Generations of men are coming to see through their experiences with their partners that women can't give birth without medical help. Menstrual suppression is promoted and young women, fresh to their cycles are put on the Pill to control them. Women are encouraged to avoid the experience of peri-

menopause, the aged are sequestered to 'homes' and death is relegated to medicine. And that's just the story of women's bodies, the same pattern of oppression of the 'feminine' is played out in education, farming, politics, healthcare, etc. From the patriarchy has come capitalism and basically capitalism doesn't honour the mother – woman as mother, the value and importance of the mother to her children or our Mother Earth. These are the symptoms of the wounded feminine of the patriarchy, and the wounded feminine means the wounded masculine as well.

When people look back on this time they will wonder what we were thinking??!!

Australia, the land of my birth, is a country that now has many different cultures living together, sometimes in harmony, sometimes not. The land is sacred, as all land is, and it is the original home of one of the oldest cultures on our planet. The white people came to Australia originally back in the 1700's as explorers claiming new lands for their mother country and mostly as prisoners, known as convicts, from England. The white men killed the indigenous people and over the years the wild lands were cleared for farming and divided up amongst the new comers to own. Many plants and animals were brought to Australia to make it more familiar for the English folk and these over the years have progressively choked the natural environment and killed many of the indigenous animals. The original wisdom of the Australian Aboriginals is mostly lost and many of their sacred practices and ceremonies have become tourist attractions. The indigenous women's wisdom is predominantly hidden and secret. And even in their own culture, those women who speak out about the secrets are shunned. The land is over farmed and salinated, the rivers are polluted, big companies mine the land for many things including coal, gas and uranium, destroying the wild, natural places. Many children don't play outside any more, and climbing trees is banned at school. Everyone is exposed to the oestrogens that women who are taking the Pill (the most prescribed drug in the world) or Hormone Replacement Therapy (for inconvenient menopause symptoms) share through their urine as it mixes with the water table that is the water we all drink and use. Menstrual suppression is encouraged through the use of hormonal implants and three monthly injections of hormones, and many women take antidepressant drugs (the number having doubled in the last decadeⁱ). 11% of children in Australia have been diagnosed with ADHDⁱⁱ, 1 in 88 children have autism, and one person is diagnosed with dementia every six minutes!ⁱⁱⁱ. One in three women experience domestic violence^{iv}, 45% of women in prison are raped ^v, 2 in 5 women are sexually abused as children. The caesarean rate is over 30%. Postnatal depression affects 1 in 7 women^{vi}. The data speaks for itself. And as Michel Odent, French obstetrician and 'champion of *natural* birth' says, we have no more time to be 'politically correct', time is running out, we are at the bottom of the abyss.....

As without, so within,
as within so without....
Things need to change.

Shamanic Womancraft is part of the change, the new paradigm of the healed feminine and the healed masculine.

Its time to re-member ourselves, and this women can do by reclaiming feminine wisdom through reconnecting with the women's mysteries. The women's mysteries are the blood mysteries, the wisdom of the cycles. We already know this, we actually live it every moment of every day, yet mostly we do this unconsciously. The time has come to bring consciousness to our cycles. When we do pay attention we can more easily flow with what is, the ever constant opportunity for transformation.

Women are awakening and men are too, and that is actually our responsibility. When women bring consciousness to their cycles, they gain a greater awareness of the cycles of the Earth and life. This brings a respect and willingness to be caretakers the Earth and all her inhabitants. And this is what the Earth needs now. No longer can we hide, deny or distract ourselves, we need to act and we need 'to be the change we want to see in the world'.

At its cutting edge, Science, the dominant God of our culture, who has supplanted the Church in many cultures, is 'seeing the light'. Cellular biologists are 'finding Goddess/God, in the petri dish'. Cutting edge Medicine is seeing the influence the 'environment', both within and without, has on the occurrence of disease - epigenetics. Philosophers and healers are 'seeing' the mind body connection, and of course many have known and practiced like that for eons. However there is a grand awakening happening, this information is flowing into the mainstream.

And often this awakening comes to us as a result of or during our transformational rites of passage, either when we do our research and find alternatives to those offered as standard practice by our culture or through a shadow awakening when we find the lessons in our trauma.

I came to all this as a twenty five year old who wanted to have a baby! I wanted to learn all about it so I went to study to become a midwife. I began my midwifery training in a big city hospital, a daughter of the patriarchy, a fish swimming in the ocean of our culture, blind to the water. Sure I felt there was unfairness toward women, but I'd been enculturated to believe that that was just the way it was. Women were less than men. I didn't really know that I knew that, I just 'knew' it. I couldn't 'see' the water, I was simply immersed in it. But I saw it really for the first time in all its 'glory' as I saw how women were treated giving birth. I saw institutionalised violence toward women and babies masquerading as safety. I saw men, fathers, treated without respect, told to 'sit in the corner' and their power as protector taken from them. I saw the system and those in uniforms take the power and abuse it.

And then I learned from my own three experiences of giving birth, and from the women I cared for as midwife over three decades - the impact of how our mothers and their mothers before them were born, the impact of our own birth, our early childhood experiences, and our menarche on the beliefs, fears and attitudes that we develop, that become us, and how they then impact how we in turn give birth. And I have seen this 'play out' over and over. And I see all this as the unfolding of each of our soul's journey here this lifetime. We have the birth

we need to have to teach us what we need to learn about ourselves to take us to the next place on our journey to wholeness.

I have learned so much from the Great Mother, the Goddess – our Earth. Nature is a wonderful teacher. I have learned by stirring my cauldron, through all my experiences in my life as I go round and round the wheel of the cycles. I have learned about the nature of rebirth, growth and development, about what the 'harvest' of our growth reveals, about the need to let go, and that death is part of the cycle. And, I have learned about the feminine and masculine ways.

The Earth teaches us about including and transcending, about the ongoing cycle of - rebirth, growth, full bloom, harvest, letting go, decay, death and rebirth.....over and over in so many ways. Women live this cycle every moment of their lives when they are not drugged with artificial hormones. Within the menstrual cycle and through conscious rites of passage there is so much opportunity for 'personal growth', self-awareness and healing, and that's the point! This awareness and practice will bring the shift of paradigms, an approach that includes and transcends, that grows and learns from what went before, that sees the lessons and gifts of every experience, especially the hard ones.

Shamanic Womancraft is for the modern woman, and by that I mean the woman of now, the women the Earth needs now. Beyond shamanism, which has at its heart a patriarchal perspective, shamanic womancraft sees an individual as already whole and able to heal themselves, and actually the only one who can heal themselves. There is a shift from the 'culture of the expert' which includes shaman, to a healer heal thyself perspective. Everyone is a healer, especially of themselves. Shamanic womancraft embraces and uses the modern awareness of brainwave states and quantum physics. Sitting in circles together, all students, all teachers, doing craft, with 'single pointed focus', we create slower brain wave states that enable us to access our subconscious where all our memories and feelings, often suppressed, lay. As we quieten our minds we open our hearts and we feel what's there waiting to be noticed for its gift as a healing opportunity. The medicine of our Power Animals become the qualities we need to remember about ourselves, to re-in-corporate, to be fully in our power. Working with what is arising in our lives, our feelings, our bodies we can feel what needs to be felt, see what needs to be seen and hear what needs to be heard, no short cuts. And rather than see what is wrong, we see opportunities for healing. Rather than think we are broken, we know we are already whole. Once we ask of a challenge, as Jeannine would ask - 'how does this serve' - what does this tell me about me and the way of things?...we see the gifts that is brings, the opportunities for seeing beneath as to the beliefs, attitudes and fears that enabled that experience and whether we want to update those, or not!

The blood mysteries – our rites of passage and the menstrual cycle, give us practical ways to bring consciousness to the healing opportunities available to us in our daily life. Reclaiming the sacred, spiritual and shamanic dimensions of womanhood - the spiritual practice of menstruation, shamanic birthing, and honouring the menarche, menopause and death is remembering the wisdom of

the cycles and restoring the balance of masculine and feminine within and without.

Our rites of passage are where the 'sacred meets the mundane'. Mundane means ordinary and common-place. Although our rites of passage are far from ordinary, yet they are part of what it is to be a woman, so in that much they are common-place but sadly they are mostly not honoured for the transformation magnificence they truly are and hold, nor for the opportunities they present. Our rites of passage - birth, menarche, childbirth (each time), peri-menopause and death are portals, energetic vortices that connect with our soul's journey this lifetime. Hidden in plain view, so to speak, described by our experiences at each rite of passage, are the clues to the unfolding of the story of our life this time around. The 'lessons' we have come to learn on our soul's journey to wholeness are woven through these experiences, for they are the moments of our transformation, when we become the next level of our being-ness - from maiden to woman, from woman to mother, from mother to maga, wise woman, and onward to beyond. The experiences we have around our rites of passage are embedded in our being, they inform us of what is within and without and become the cauldron of the transformative process that is us. They are the altars of transformation and offer so much opportunity for healing the feminine within and without.

At each Altar we are met by the Goddess – the Sacred Feminine. She comes to us in her dark and light form, for they are actually one. We meet those aspects of ourselves as they play out within us, and outside us, in the culture in which we live. We learn how our culture expects us to behave and we 'decide' whether we will be part of the re-wounding or the healing. This happens somewhere between the worlds, where our soul, the sacred, meets the mundane and our life journey unfolds. There are no mistakes, simply an unfolding, step by step, and each woman moves on in her mother-line, doing her part in the healing, the evolution, there is no other way. We are as if the flowers on this Earth garden, and we are both the flower and the gardener. Both and. For we have choice when we awaken to the potential of our visits to the altars of transformation and we have choice when we greet our daughters and our sisters there. Conscious rites of passage enable healing and learning from the journey so far and enable through that - growth and development, evolution.

At the Altar of Menarche a girl is transformed into a woman, and there is a transmission of information about what it means to be a woman. She has already had her introduction into the practice of how to care for self through the cycles by observing her mother as she negotiates her cycles. She feels an alignment with the interconnectedness of everything, especially the connection with all women. There is a gradual awakening to the power, role and responsibility of being a woman, of the spiritual practice of menstruation, the beauty and preciousness of her body and how to nurture and care for her self through her cycle. She becomes the Altar of the Feminine.

From years of engaging with the spiritual practice of menstruation, she is experienced at following her body's messages, able to navigate her inner world and

to rest deep within her womb. Aware of the innate transformative power and beauty of woman, she comes to the Altar of Childbirth ready for her shamanic experience of birthing. She uses the pain or strong sensations of labour as a portal into an altered state of consciousness, shamanic consciousness, where she feels the oneness of all things. In this place she connects with her baby and with her soul path. All that arises is what must on her journey to wholeness. She knows she will have the birth she needs to teach her what she needs to learn and to prepare her for mothering - the soulcrafting. She travels to her inner birth temple, she lets go and she opens to be the clear vessel she can be for her baby's journey earthside.

When her fertility wanes and her cycle pattern changes, she moves to the Altar of Menopause. This, like her birthings, takes as long as it takes, however long it needs to be as she labours to birth herself anew. She is reminded of all the lessons she learned about herself through her visits to the Birth Altar and she brings that wisdom to her own rebirth. She cannot forget what she learned because it is reflected back to her through her children. She gathers the pearls of wisdom for her basket as her harvest to share in her coming years as Maga, wise woman.

Finally, when her time has come, she rests in her home with her loved ones close by and she remembers and give thanks for her life. She passes when she is ready. Her passage is facilitated by the tears of her loved ones as they say goodbye.

The menstrual cycle, the whole cycle from bleeding to bleeding again, is a cycle to live your life by. You will be, actually, whether you realise it or not, and everyone you live with will also be under its influence! If you don't believe that, just ask them! Bringing awareness to your menstrual cycle, incorporating a spiritual practice with your menstrual cycle brings a higher consciousness to it. And this will enable you to flow with it, to use it, and to learn from it, rather than feel oppressed by it. Doing this honours you, the feminine and the Earth. It is a healing practice and you will benefit from it, as will the collective and the Earth. Your menstrual cycle IS your spiritual practice. The menstrual cycle is also another portal into the sacred, spiritual, shamanic and transcendent dimensions of womanhood, repeatedly and on-goingly.

Your experience of your menstrual cycle is a barometer of your life stresses. It is a stress sensitive process and therefore is a 'read out' of what you need to be dealing with. It is also a pathway to self-awareness on your soul's journey to wholeness - Enlightenment through cycle awareness! a path for personal and collective evolution.

Our menstrual cycles call us into our bodies, if things are amiss, one way or another she will get your attention and you'll have the opportunity to take responsibility for yourself, your life, what you eat, think, do, work, play etc. Or you can play the victim and blame your hormones like they are some unwelcome guest who's taken over. See literally what's going on and think metaphorically, that might give you some clues. Look for the patterns that reoccur in your life and how your menstrual cycle reflects that.

Each of the four weeks of the menstrual cycle, have the energy, characteristics and qualities of the four seasons of the Earth that we all know so well.

Day one is your first day of bleeding.

Week 1 is as if late winter and early spring, week 2 is late spring early summer, week 3 is late summer early autumn and week 4 is late autumn early winter.

So weeks 3 and 4 have the characteristics of autumn and winter, the descent, the move or pull inward, and just like the deciduous trees lose their leaves at this time, the same thing happens metaphorically for us, everything that is no longer needed in your life shows up, so you can let it go with your blood and start fresh and new with the 'spring' growth energy for your next cycle.

The phenomena, and opportunity for letting go of what is no longer needed, shows up to us as irritations in weeks 3 and 4 of our cycle - because irritations are what WILL get your attention, these things that show up irritating us, ARE the things that no longer serve us, the things, ways, beliefs, attitudes we need to let go of. And these things are not about other people they are about ourselves, our beliefs, attitudes and fears that are limiting us and our experiences, and these show up in our relationships, our health, our life! This natural process has been turned by our culture and the medical model, into pathology, which means something is wrong and needs to be fixed and its been named as a syndrome – PMS or premenstrual syndrome. It's the time when women stop complying. Our opportunity for renewal, and rebirth, brings everything that's not working in our lives into full view, and instead of being seen for the wonderful opportunity it is, it is seen and experienced as moodiness, crankiness, and all the one hundred or so physical symptoms that combine with it, which are really messages from our body to get us to change what's going on. There are so many symptoms associated with this time, its been relegated to disease and guess what - it can be fixed with the Pill.

Do you know, that the Pill is the most prescribed medication in the world! Its so famous its called THE pill! And its all about controlling women's cycles. It creates a pseudo pregnancy, your body thinks you are pregnant, so you wont ovulate and risk conception. When you bleed on the pill its not a real period, it's a withdrawal bleed because you drop the synthetic hormone levels and that makes you bleed.

Honouring the menstrual cycle as the spiritual practice of menstruation, also means bringing consciousness to the process and what goes on around it. Disposable menstrual products not only cost a lot of money over and over, and are made with chemicals and take 100's of years to biodegrade, they also contribute to the huge use of pesticides in the cotton farming to create them and contribute to landfill, blocked drains and sea pollution. You can honour yourself, your cycle and the Earth by using reusable cloth pads or mooncups/keepers or sponges. You can make prayers with your blood as you return it to the Earth, and you can dedicate your eggs not just to babies, to world peace, to love!

In the old times before electricity, and when we lived together as a community, the women all bled at the same time at the dark of the moon. They would retreat together to the Moonlodge or Red Tent, and enjoy their bleeding time free of the chores and concerns of their lives. They usually spent three days away from their

families, just with the other women. They would talk together, rest, dream, care for themselves and each other. It was a nurturing environment that they all loved and appreciated. Many of the women would have prophetic dreams during this time. The women would be blessed with a vision on their third day of bleeding and this would be shared with the whole community on their return. The community hugely valued and relied on these visions the women would return with and used them as instruction for direction and focus for the community. In our modern western patriarchal culture this practice of retreating at our bleeding time has almost disappeared.

The acceptance of this practice changed when the patriarchal culture, in which we live, took hold several thousand years ago and dishonoured the feminine, making all things associated with women and especially her fertility, her sexuality, her blood - taboo, dirty, evil, bad, shameful etc. The Red Tent was reinterpreted as a place to send women away to when they were bleeding because they were deemed dirty and needing to be separated from the rest of the people, especially their husbands and to stop them from preparing food, lest they contaminate it. Now, in our modern culture menstruation is basically ignored, women are encouraged and maybe even forced to carry on regardless, ads for tampons show girls in white, playing sport! And the correlation between the attitudes to the feminine of our culture and the way we treat the Earth are clear and obvious.

Honouring your need for retreat time when you are bleeding is your responsibility, not any one else's. Medicating yourself with drugs during menstruation means you carry on regardless, just NOT what you're meant to do, if you do, you miss the opportunity for letting go, for renewal and then you get on this treadmill, of 'the same old same old'. If you don't let go of what shows up during your third week, masquerading as symptoms of PMS, then guess what grows bigger next cycle!

Honouring your bleeding time in whatever way you can is part of the spiritual practice of menstruation. One way or another you must get the space you need at your bleeding time, this may end up being a long bath, an early night to bed, or your own private dreaming time.

So, the Red Tent or Moon Lodge or Blood Temple can be an actual space or a virtual space, one way or another it needs to exist. If it does not exist if a woman does not honour her need for retreat, then what happens are all the physical symptoms that need to, to have the woman retreat into her inner space, her inner Red Tent as it were, this includes all the friction, fights, arguments etc required in your close relationships so that those people will avoid you, and want to keep out of your way! So, we create our much needed Red Tent, or much needed retreat space, unconsciously if we don't do it consciously, so why not do it consciously. Do you really think you would be cranky, moody, upset, mad, angry, impatient etc, if you knew when your blood came that you would be leaving your normal life situation and heading to your retreat space to let go of what no longer worked in your life, to learn what you can from your month just passed, to decide what you will take into the next cycle and what you will leave

behind, to replenish, and renew yourself, and prepare yourself for the month ahead? I doubt you'd be feeling cranky, I bet you'd be feeling honoured and excited even!

So, like every other cycle, if you try to control it, you miss its wisdom, its healing and its growth and evolutionary opportunities, and, most often to your peril.

We sat for three hours together in a circle in the Red Tent, ten girls, pre-menarche, 9-11 years old, seven mothers, and two grandmothers, exploring and sharing the wisdom and gifts of the menstrual cycle. Part of the process is a 'brainstorm', with the girls calling out all the things they've heard about the menstrual cycle – "growth, messy, empowering, yuk, learning, disgusting..." This time, unusually, there were more positive words than negative, refreshing. After I taught them the 'wheel', the wisdom of the cycles, I drummed for them and they did, women and girls, a shamanic drum journey into their wombs to meet their Inner Goddess. I suggested to the girls that they ask Her whatever they want to and perhaps what they need to know or do next. After the journey they drew pictures of their experience...the girl who called out most of the negative words in the brainstorming, brought her drawing to show me, it was a beautiful Goddess image that she saw with some words that were the question she asked and the answer she received. "Why do they say its yuk?" she asked, "Because they don't know." said her Inner Goddess! In the closing circle one of the girls said "I feel like I've learned something really important that I didn't know". One of the mothers said "I have found a tribe for my daughter, I'm so glad she can have a different experience to me."

Your experience of menarche, your first blood, prepares you for your experience of menstruation which then affects how you give birth and then how you experience peri-menopause. Its all connected. She who was initiated into womanhood at the altar of menarche is she who shows up at the altar of birth, complete with all the lessons she learned about how to be a woman, and what it means to be a woman. And if that was body shame then that plays out in the birth. And its no surprise that most women ask for drugs during childbirth to escape the pain, they learned how to do that well enough during their periods. However they are not given the important information that these drugs affect the baby, I wonder if they knew that if they would choose that?

Young women are taught to not trust their bodies, if their periods are irregular or their flow is heavy or their pain is strong, they are prescribed the pill to bring them into order, so they can be predictable, controlled, on time, and not be inconvenienced by their bodies messages that happen to have them make life style and diet changes better for their health. And then this all happens again at birth in so many ways with over 30% inductions because women don't give birth on time, *there's no right time, just when the baby is ready!*

When drugged in labour a woman gives up the opportunity of experiencing and so realising that she has everything she needs inside her, that she and her baby 'work' together to birth, and also she drugs her baby. *Drugged babies, probably most of us, have a default of vague-ing out, especially when the going gets tough.*

Sometimes, rarely, drugs and intervention are required to save lives and if this is so, we give great thanks for that.

Once a month I meet with a group of maidens, ranging from 11-16. We sit in a circle and pass the talking bowl, and answer the questions – Where are you in your cycle today? How are you experiencing that? What would you like to share with the circle?

Imagine at this age practicing this inward reflection, hearing what your body is 'telling' you.....

Each of these girls has experienced a community ceremony, welcoming them to womanhood. Many have grown up being part of this community and long for their turn, long for their turn to be welcomed into what feels like a 'special club' – womanhood. Others are brought to the menarche ceremony because their mothers hear about it from friends and want this for their daughters rather than repeat the nothingness or the shame inducing experience they had.

We need to consciously use one of the main principles of permaculture for our children's wellbeing, and for our future, we need to create the conditions, the culture, inside and out, that supports them, not just to grow but, to thrive.

We are sitting in the kitchen together at a country property near Melbourne in Australia, about to start my 'Moonsong Workshop – Reclaiming Feminine Wisdom Through Reconnection With the Women's Mysteries'. More women are arriving, we will start by smudging each other, 'cleansing' ourselves with the smoke of sage to remove any negative energy, and will then sit around the circle according to where we are in our cycle, aligning with the directions around the wheel making a mandala with ourselves that tells the story of the wisdom of the cycles.

I will begin our weekend of reconnection by reading to the circle of women the 'Herstory'^{vii}, which explains how we got to this situation of disconnection.

There is a groundswell, an energy moving across our planet, a wave of women everywhere feeling the stirrings of inner strength and inner power, awakening to the sacred feminine. The sacred feminine, the experience of being woman that is whole, holy, revering the life force that moves through us, that is us...the Daughters of Gaia are waking up.

By looking at our stories we can begin to see the patterns and to see and feel the theme. Each of us is here to be that, that pattern, that theme evolving. Each a fractal or a face of the Goddess, the Divine Feminine incarnate. Each doing her bit, as our mothers before us and theirs before them, to forever-ago. 'We are the ones we've been waiting for!' the women who have the privilege and honour to do this work, for all our relations. This is not a minor travail. This is what we've come for, this is our responsibility. And it takes courage to stand before the dominant culture and say 'No More'!

No more will I let my babies be taken from me, filled with poisons and encouraged to grow up away from me, as if my role as their mother is something that is better done by another.

No more will I perpetuate the belief that to be a woman is less that, or that our blood is taboo or that my body is shameful.

No more will I birth in a laboratory that is driven by fear and robs me of the deep inner knowing I have and need, to be the mother I am, the mother my children have chosen.

No more will I ignore the calling of my body inward as I bleed and have the opportunity and responsibility to let go of all that no longer serves and plant the seeds of new, for all my relations.

No more will I battle with my sisters in a competitive way to get attention from other.

No more will I believe that as I age I am no longer worthy, desirable or important.

No more will I defer to another when I know.

No more will I support a death process that denies the transcendence and healing it enables.

At the Altars of Transformation I will stand as a Priestess of the Earth, one of the Women the Earth needs now and give thanks for the wounds as I know that these are the cauldron from which I rebirth myself anew. As the 'wound reveals the cure', I can heal, be transformed, wiser for the experience and 'doing my bit' in the healing, for all my relations. For I truly know that all is as it needs to be, that we have the experiences we need to have to teach us what we need to learn about ourselves, to take us to the next place on our journey to wholeness....all that is required, is deep trust in the way of things, the process, the cycles.... Trust the Process – and we are each a process.

Afterword

What can you do?

Find or create a women's circle, meet regularly, creating community.

Celebrate rites of passage for yourself and your community.

Bring Red Tents to your community gatherings and festivals.

Raise your children to be conscious of the menstrual cycle, don't hide it from them. Honour your cycle, 'retreat' how ever you can given your life circumstances.

Get to know yourself through understanding your cycle, chart your cycle, notice how differently you feel each day, see the waxing and waning of your energy, your libido, your creative urges, observe your moods how they change each day and week. Come to know yourself.

We may have lost our stories, our culture, our traditions, but our bodies and the Earth speak to us of them, through the rhythms and the patterns, through the changes and the transformations. And all we need to do is slow down when we feel to, to listen and to act from our hearts.

ⁱ <http://sydney.edu.au/news/84.html?newsstoryid=10549>

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- ii <http://www.everydaywithadhd.com.au/FAQRetrieve.aspx?ID=41495>
- iii <http://www.australianageingagenda.com.au/2013/03/26/article/Dementia-rates-on-the-rise/EUOVBAWGTT>
- iv <http://somethingincommon.gov.au/dig-deeper/freedom/violence-against-women>
- v <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-05-13/sexual-assault-rife-in-psychiatric-hospitals-report/4686480>
- vi http://www.panda.org.au/images/stories/PDFs/Panda_FS14_WomenPostNatalDepression_FAcopy.pdf
- vii You can download 'Herstory' from my website:
<http://www.moonsong.com.au/downloads.html>