

FESTIVAL IN LEO
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Good evening, friends, and welcome. We meet tonight for the purpose of group service through meditation. Some of us might wonder, sometimes, what effect group meditation can have on a practical level, especially at a time of such urgent need. There are all the problems caused by the global financial crisis which is causing suffering for so many. There are the problems generated by the failure of a large portion of humanity to exercise what might be called “environmental stewardship”, and which is reaching a level of such urgency that the planet’s condition could be called “critical” in medical terms. These and many other problems are being brought to our awareness by the media, which is now so global in its sweep that there is scarcely any aspect of modern life that remains secret, hidden.

“All things are being shouted from the housetops”, just as the Bible predicted at the close of the age—not the “end times” as the fundamentalists think, but the close of an age ruled by Pisces and on the verge of a new age which will be ruled by Aquarius. It’s a time of flux and change, when the shock of recognition isn’t yet accompanied by a clarity of understanding or a sense of purpose. In the age we’re living in now, the old ideas and assumptions that have guided humanity’s course no longer seem to apply. And in just such a time as this, our group service in meditation is needed more than ever, for at the moment of the full moon each month, the moon, which is only a dead shell, spiritually speaking, stands out of the way, so to speak, and the Sun, symbolic of the soul, stands in direct and open alignment with our planet Earth. At this time each month, the spiritual energies of Light and Love pour into our world, directed by the spiritual Hierarchy towards humanity. Through our group meditation, we can create a channel in consciousness for Light and Love to pour in and make impact upon intelligent, responsive human minds. In this way, gradually the new and more appropriate ideas for world betterment can be registered. These Ideas, on their highest level, constitute the divine Plan. But this Plan cannot be imposed upon humanity, no matter how good it might be for us. The very definition of man, after all, is “one who thinks”, and this is the essence of humanity’s responsibility in the Plan: to think, in unison with all intelligent men and women of goodwill, and in concert with the spiritual Hierarchy, giving form and clarity to the ideas which will form the foundation of the new world in the Aquarian age.

All this is the intended purpose of these monthly group meditations, so let us take a moment to link up with our co-workers who share this responsibility with us, meeting as we are in groups large and small throughout the world. Then let us say the Gayatri.

O Thou Who givest sustenance to the universe,
From Whom all things proceed,
To Whom all things return,
Unveil to us the face of the true Spiritual Sun
Hidden by a disc of golden light
That we may know the Truth
And do our whole duty
As we journey to Thy sacred feet.

The quest for a path that will lead one out of darkness into light, from the unreal to the real, and from death to immortality, is the central, all consuming quest of the human being from time immemorial. It’s a path traversed in consciousness, which makes it much more difficult than the trek even to the summit of Mt. Everest, for it demands nothing less than the transformation of the individual’s identity—of how he sees himself and his place in the universe.

The essential purpose of this solar system, the Ageless Wisdom tells us, is the unfoldment of consciousness. This unfoldment, or perhaps expansion is a better term, is accomplished through the development of sensitivity. The whole process of evolution is based upon the impact of a greater life upon a lesser life, with the greater life serving as a positive charge, electrically speaking, and the lesser life a negative charge. As the lesser life begins to respond to the impact of the greater—as it becomes sensitive to it—the life within that lesser atom or form is quickened and stimulated until it reaches a stage of sensitive response sufficient to enable it to join with the greater life.

In human terms we see this evolutionary development of sensitivity played out in the stage of mass consciousness—the consciousness of the herd, which is a tribal consciousness, followed by the stage of individuality, of the separated self, which is succeeded by group consciousness, itself a progressive expansion of consciousness which steadily extends the outer perimeter of identity in larger and larger arcs until the identity is merged with the whole.

When we look at humanity today, we can see that, for many people, the stage of the individuated self is dominant. This is the Leo experience, and it's unavoidable, for "before an individual can achieve initiation, he must be fully self-conscious", Alice Bailey said. Leo is said to be the birthplace of the individual, the taking of form by the self-conscious man who emerges out of the mass or herd experience of Cancer. "The outstanding theme of Leo", Alice Bailey said, "is the activity of the self-conscious unit in relation to its environment or the development of sensitive response to the surrounding impacts by the one who stands as the Sun stands—at the centre of its little universe. The whole story and function of Leo is sensitivity."

This idea is summed up in the keynote for the disciple in Leo—"I am That and That am I." Such is the benevolent nature of the evolutionary process that the self-sufficient unit becomes increasingly aware of its aloneness, its isolation from the larger environment, and begins to recognise this as a limitation. When we extend this concept to humanity as a whole, we gain hope, for today Leo is becoming increasingly dominant. Today we can see a growing urge on the part of many people in diverse nations and cultures for world unity. The only question is whether the necessary sacrifices to achieve this are recognised yet, but they will be. "The issues are becoming clearer in the minds of the masses", Alice Bailey said. "They can and will act with full awareness and purpose when the time comes, and will understand the implications and the price involved in a manner not hitherto possible."

Under spiritual law, it's inevitable that as the energies of Aquarius gain strength, the steadily growing impact of group consciousness is evoking a reaction seen in the stimulation of the identity of the separated self. We see this perhaps most dramatically portrayed in the almost unbelievable greed and selfishness that led to the global financial crisis, in which a few people skilled in the manipulation of financial markets can make tens and hundreds of millions of dollars, even billions, while countless others are losing their jobs, their homes, and their hope. Again, expanding this selfishness and isolation to humanity's place in the evolutionary scheme, we see the results of humanity's myopia in the way it has related to the environment, effectively plundering it for selfish human purposes rather than exercising humanity's spiritual responsibility as planetary Mediator bridging between the higher and lower kingdoms which share the planet with us. But we are waking up, and such Leo servers as Barack Obama (Leo sun) and Al Gore (Leo rising) are helping us. Those are just two individuals who embody, I believe, the higher aspect of Leo.

Leo, Alice Bailey said, marks the height of achievement for the human soul, and today this is stimulated by the Shamballa force, the pure, uncompromising power of the will-to-good, which always serves the good of the whole. This will is acquired in stages, progressing from self-determination—the little will of

the separated self which firmly declares “I am”, to the higher will of the soul, whose identity is group-conscious, and who realises “I am That and That am I”, and finally to the utterly selfless will which sees no differentiation and therefore is unresponsive to the demands of the personal self. That channel simply can’t be tuned in. This is the stage of consciousness known by the mysterious declaration “I am That I am.” This is the stage of full self-realisation. As the commentary in *The Light of the Soul* says, “The initiate can now say, with full conscious knowledge, ‘I am that I am’ and he knows himself as one with the All-Self. Doubt no longer controls. The full light of day or completed illumination takes place and floods the whole being of the seer.”

The will is interesting to study in terms of Leo, whose symbol is the lion, the so-called “King of the beasts”. Rulership, the urge to direct and govern, is fundamental to Leo, but the hardest rulership of all is that over oneself, one’s appetites and desires. The individuality of Leo is so dominant that no one can govern the Leo except the Leo individual himself, Alice Bailey said, and being Leo she should know. And with the personal will so strong a force, it absolutely must be controlled by the soul and the higher mind if the Leo individual is to progress from the stage of self assertiveness to the stage of soul awareness of purpose.

Not coincidentally, the stars line up in support of this effort. There is a gigantic star in the constellation Leo called Regulus which has been identified since ancient times as the Law-Giver and which is symbolised by the Lion. The significance of Regulus lies in the thought that man can be a law unto himself, for he has that within him which is the quality of the king or ruler. Man is governed by a number of laws: the law of nature, which man has made amazing strides in dominating through flight, even putting a man on the moon, and in the harnessing of solar and wind power; by the law he makes for himself, as we see in the court systems and perhaps most specifically in the practice of democracy, which could be said to be a nation’s striving for self-rule and self-mastery; and by spiritual law. To this last and highest form of law, man will eventually subordinate himself, Alice Bailey said, and the task of the individual human being is “to cut away all that hinders the application of spiritual law”.

This effort brings us back to our opening mantram, the Gayatri, which is said to be one of the most ancient prayers known to man, handed down in the Upanishads of ancient India. The quest to move from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality, is the struggle to gain freedom from the control of form. For a very long stage of the way, the individual, incarnated soul can’t see beyond the material form. To really affirm “I am That and That am I” requires that one relinquish the grip of the separated self—a level of consciousness that was so hard-won in the struggle to escape from the herd—and to gradually extend the identity to include a larger and larger sense of group relationships. And, finally, the goal is to merge the identity with a much greater but intangible life in which the individual is only a tiny fragment, and to then declare “I am that I am.”

The difficulty of this quest shouldn’t be underestimated, for the Tibetan said that the words “the part becomes the whole” sum up an achievement of “staggering import”. The phrase “the part becomes the whole” is familiar to all students of esotericism, but few have any real idea of what it represents psychologically. The words “veil and signify the most tremendous experience of which the human consciousness is capable”, the Tibetan said, “and one which looms with increasing significance during each successive initiation”. The spiritual aspirant searches for this realisation along the Path, yet all the while it lies within himself. The one Master is found within; it is the soul, the inner ruler. And this one Master is already a corporate part of the whole. The problem is that we don’t consciously realise this unity so long as our gaze is fixed on the three worlds of physical, emotional, and mental existence. Perhaps that’s why suffering and loss are so often the means by which the grip of form is broken.

All the struggle and strife of the past century, which is said to be the bloodiest in human history, combined with the tremendous growth in literacy and mass education, plus the increasing communications network which binds us all in awareness so that no one can justifiably say “I didn’t know”, and the environment of the natural world which is holding up a mirror in which we can see the results of our choices and desires—all this has brought humanity to the present stage. It’s bringing the shock of recognition which is revealing an interdependence that should vanquish forever the illusion that we are alone in the world. And this is good. In the experience of Leo we awaken to the divinity of the human identity, and through the experience of Leo we awaken to the larger whole: I am That and That am I. Let us work now in meditation.