

**WESAK FESTIVAL**  
New York, May 8, 2009

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Good evening, friends, and welcome to the Wesak Festival, held each year at the time of the full moon of Taurus, which occurs tomorrow morning at 12:03am. This is the great Eastern Festival, the high-water mark of the spiritual year when the Forces of Enlightenment are most active. These forces carry the spiritual energy of love-wisdom, of which the Buddha and the Christ are the supreme embodiments. This opening talk isn't meant to be an esoteric lecture, but rather to provide a way to focus our minds as a group, in preparation for our meditation. We've all come from a busy day, so let us take this moment to collectively focus on the opportunity before us for group service. The power generated by a united group mind is far greater than if we were to work on our own, and our group meditation tonight is an opportunity to help construct a channel in consciousness for the inflow of the Forces of Enlightenment.

Through that channel, Alice Bailey wrote in her booklet on the Wesak festival, "light and inspiration and spiritual revelation can be released in such a flood of power that it will work definite changes in human consciousness and ameliorate conditions in this needy world. It will open men's eyes to the basic realities, which are as yet only dimly sensed. Then humanity itself will apply the necessary corrections, believing it can do so in the strength of its own sensed wisdom, yet all the time, behind the scenes, stand the grouped world aspirants, working silently, in unison with each other and the Hierarchy, and thus keeping the channel open through which the needed wisdom, strength and love can flow."

The keynote of our meditation tonight expresses this particular type of service: "Let the group stand with the new group of world servers as a great 'army of implacable spiritual will' in a time of decision." To stand in silent, subjective unity with all who seek to safeguard humanity in this transitional age is the goal and the privilege we are offered at this time.

An alignment is made at Wesak which enables the contribution of each individual to find his proper place within the group context, and the group we work with extends far beyond those of us gathered in this room tonight, to encompass an unseen but worldwide group of spiritual seekers and servers of humanity that includes many nations, races, cultures and religions. The nature of alignment means that it has meaning and significance on a number of different levels. For the esotericist, the alignment that we work in at Wesak extends beyond our fellow servers to include representatives of a gigantic planetary alignment that spans a vast spectrum of consciousness if we can stretch our imagination that far, from the most exalted Beings upon our planet down to the humblest spiritual aspirant. For Buddhists, Wesak is a religious festival and a ceremony of deep spiritual significance. And for all who participate, Wesak is the highpoint of the spiritual year, so let us take a moment to imagine ourselves as one with this subjective worldwide group, visualising the lines of light and love that link all seekers in a shared quest. Regardless of religious or cultural differences, the essence of this quest is summed up in one of the oldest prayers known to man—a prayer taken from the Upanishads of ancient India:

Lead us, O Lord, From darkness to Light;  
From the unreal to the Real,  
From death to immortality.

Wesak isn't a commemoration of something that happened in the distant past, but a present living event. And indeed, there is a remote valley in the Himalayas where Buddhist pilgrims gather every year as the Taurus full moon approaches. But as is the case with all ceremonial rites that have become deeply embedded in human consciousness, there are inner dimensions to the ceremony that have significance to only a few. Over the millennia, a legend has grown up around that outer ceremony which Alice Bailey

described in her booklet. Regardless of whether one can be present for that ceremony in the Himalayas, everyone is urged to take part in the Wesak festival with a full play of the imagination. The creative imagination is the lower counterpart of the intuition, and as we use it in order to grasp somewhat the nature of the inner esoteric dimensions of this festival, we gain a deeper understanding of the divine purpose behind Wesak and the Buddha's return each year. So to prepare for our meditation let's use our imagination to visualise the esoteric significance of the alignment now being formed in that Himalayan valley as the moment of the full moon approaches. Alice Bailey describes it in her account of a kind of legend that has grown around the Wesak festival over the years:

“At the time of the full moon of Taurus, pilgrims from all the surrounding districts begin to gather; the holy men and lamas find their way into the valley and fill the southern and the middle parts, leaving the northeastern end relatively free. There, so the legend runs, there gathers a group of those great Beings Who are the Custodians on Earth of God's Plan for our planet and for humanity. By what name we call these Beings does not greatly matter... With Their wisdom, love and knowledge, they stand as a protective wall around humanity, and seek to lead us on, step by step (as They Themselves were led in Their time) from darkness to light, from the unreal to the real, and from death to immortality. This group of knowers of divinity are the main participants in the Wesak Festival.”

Then she describes the actual ceremony (as legend has it) held in the Wesak valley: “They range Themselves in the northeastern end of the valley, and in concentric circles (according to the status and grade of Their initiatory development) prepare Themselves for a great act of service. In front of the rock, looking towards the northeast, stand Those Beings Who are called by Their disciples ‘the Three Great Lords.’ These are the Christ, Who stands in the centre; the Manu, Who stands on His right; and the Lord of Civilisation, Who stands on His left. These three face the rock, upon which there rests a great crystal bowl, full of water...

“Behind the grouped Masters, adepts, initiates and senior workers under God's plan, are to be found the world disciples and aspirants in their various grades and groups who constitute at this time the New Group of World Servers. Those present in their physical bodies have found their way there by ordinary means. Others are present in their spiritual bodies and in the dream state.

“As the hour of the full moon approaches, a stillness settles down upon the crowd, and all look towards the northeast. Certain ritualistic movements take place, in which the grouped Masters and Their disciples of all ranks take up symbolic positions, and form on the floor of the valley such significant symbols as the five-pointed star, with the Christ standing at the highest point; or a triangle, with the Christ at the apex; or a cross, and other well known formations, all of which have a deep and potent meaning. This is all done to the sound of certain chanted words and esoteric phrases, called mantrams. The expectancy in the waiting, onlooking crowds becomes very great, and the tension is real and increasing. Through the entire body of people there seems to be felt a stimulation or potent vibration which has the effect of awakening the souls of those present, fusing and blending the group into one united whole, and lifting all into a great act of spiritual demand, readiness, and expectancy. It is the climax of the world's aspiration, focussed in this waiting group. These three words—demand, readiness and expectancy—best describe the atmosphere surrounding those present in this secret valley.”

So runs Alice Bailey's account of the Wesak legend.

Each year the Buddha returns at Wesak to strengthen the relationship of humanity to Shamballa, the centre where the will of God is known. Twice in recent years—in 1975 and again in 2000—the Shamballa force has been released directly into humanity, the writings of Alice Bailey say. This is the pure spiritual energy of the will-to-good, which fosters synthesis, and we can clearly see this energy working out in the world as the drive towards unification and globalisation. As this spiritual energy

makes impact upon human consciousness, its effects aren't always of the highest quality, but that is inevitable due to human free will. The keys to enable us to respond to this powerful energy of Shamballa more correctly are found in the Buddha's message, life and teaching.

The Buddha's achievement when he attained his enlightenment so long ago took the form of an insight into the cause of suffering and its remedy, an insight so ground-breaking that the writings of Alice Bailey say that through the Buddha, light was let into the world which eventually would make possible the dissipation of the glamour and fog that cloud so much of the human perception. After his breakthrough under the bodhi tree, the Buddha shared the core precepts of his realisation with a small group of disciples and these are known as the Four Noble Truths: Cease to identify with material things and desires; gain a proper sense of values; cease regarding possessions and earthly existence as of major importance; and follow the noble eightfold path, the path of right relations. The steps on this path are: Right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. If these insights sound simple (and the greatest truths are simple), they aren't easy to put into practice, for here we are, some 2500 years after his enlightenment, still trying to grasp the essence of his message, a message that seems more relevant now than ever. Has there ever been a time when it has been more apparent that we need to gain a proper sense of values, that we need to stop identifying ourselves with material things? Has there ever been a time when the failure to cultivate right livelihood has resulted in more harm, with more universal consequences, than now? Some may be asking, where did we go wrong, but the Buddha's teaching is quite clear on the cause and cure of human suffering. Self-affirmation is the cause of all sorrow; cease to identify yourself with material possessions and stop clinging to worldly desires.

For the rest of his life, the Buddha traveled throughout northern India, spreading his message to all who would listen until his death at about 80. In his last sermon, which he preached to his beloved disciple Ananda, he summed up his message by saying, "Be ye lamps unto yourselves. Rely on yourselves, and do not rely on external help. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Seek salvation alone in the truth. Look not for assistance to any one besides yourselves."

What was the source of the Buddha's confidence in the capacity of the human being to rescue himself? The writings of Alice Bailey offer some interesting insights on this. Esoterically, great avatars such as the Buddha and the Christ embody some cosmic principle which they anchor on earth, thus making it available to all humanity who follow after them. The Buddha, whose title means the "Illumined One", released Light into the world. Esoterically, light is substance, and the Buddha demonstrated the consummation of substance-matter as the medium of light. This light is present in the very substance of our planet, and that's why the Buddha said we should be lamps unto ourselves and trust this inner light to illumine our path. It illumines the path of spiritual evolution and it illumines the world, revealing the spiritual significance of everything in it. For we're told, "when the disciple has found that lighted centre in himself, he then becomes aware of the light within all forms and atoms." This is the affirmation of the keynote of Taurus, which is: "I see and when the Eye is opened, all is light." The Eye is the single eye, the ajna centre, which is called the third eye. "The third eye reveals the light to be found in the heart of every form of divine manifestation", Alice Bailey said. "The third eye is the eye of vision. By its means, the spiritual man sees behind the forms of all aspects of divine expression. He becomes aware of the light of the world, and contacts the soul within all forms, opening up the world of radiance", she said.

All this was summed up quite simply by the Buddha who, when he was asked who he was, said "I am one who woke up." And so we can wake up, when we learn to see behind the outer forms and appearances to the inner reality. What is it that keeps us from doing so? The powerful, overwhelming sense of the separated self—the illusion that we are, each of us, independent, autonomous, isolated beings living in a world of six or seven billion other similarly independent, separated beings. This illusion serves as a powerful source of glamour, for it makes the human being desire and crave more of everything that seems

to shore up the ramparts of the separated self: more money, more recognition, more attention, more recognition, more happiness, more sensual pleasure, more, more, more... And though this insatiable craving can be indulged, it gradually dawns that it can never be satisfied—not more than momentarily. Each bone thrown its way just heightens the desire for more.

How does one find liberation from this endless cycle of desire? The remedy comes with the Buddha's return each year at Wesak, when he brings the blessing of Shamballa. For Shamballa is the centre where the will of God is known, and the will is fundamentally an expression of the Law of Sacrifice. So often the will is misused for selfish advancement, as if the two-year-old child were the model for how to use the will. But the true spiritual will is the capacity to sacrifice, and the root of sacrifice, as we know, is "to make sacred". That is the key to release from suffering. Just as the Buddha said self-affirmation is the cause of all sorrow, so the ending of sorrow comes through refusal to identify with the demands of the separated self.

The sacrifice we are asked to make is to release the grip of the illusion that we are each of us an independent, separated island and begin to see ourselves not only as one humanity but as one with the whole. We start down this path to union with the whole as we begin to share, and that is enacted at the close of the legendary ceremony in the Himalayan valley each year. Alice Bailey's account tells us, "When the Buddha has again disappeared the crowd rise to their feet; the water in the bowl is distributed in tiny portions to the Masters, initiates and disciples, and They then go Their way to the place of service. The crowd, who have all brought their little cups and vessels of water, drink of them, and share with others. In this beautiful 'water ceremony of communion' we have presented for us, in symbol, an indication of the New Age which is today upon us, the Aquarian Age, the age of the Water Carrier", she said. The symbol of the Aquarian age will be the 'man bearing a pitcher of water,' as Christ foretold at the first communion service He initiated so long ago. Surely one major lesson of the present world crisis is that we need to learn to share, and we can do so when we follow the Buddha's advice to cease identifying ourselves with material things and with our desires and cravings. "Decay is inherent in all composite things", the Buddha said. Could there be any better description of the futility of material craving?

So let us now take part in the sharing of spiritual nourishment with a needy world. Through the gigantic meditation now underway throughout the world at Wesak, spiritual Light and Love and Power can pour into the world through the group channel of meditators. Let us work with our keynote, "Let the group stand with the new group of world servers as a great 'army of implacable spiritual will' in a time of decision.