

**FESTIVAL OF CAPRICORN**  
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Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the Festival of Capricorn. We are now one week into the new year, yet still perhaps glancing over our shoulders at what we left behind. January is named for the Roman god Janus, who was traditionally pictured as two-faced – one facing forward and one facing the past. And so it is with most transitions. They are usually a mixture of release, of liberation, and of sacrifice – of something being given up in order to move forward. This is touched upon in the keynote for Capricorn which we'll be working with in our meditation: *Lost am I in light supernal, yet on that light I turn my back*. The reason why the disciple must turn his back on the light is expressed so beautifully in the keynote to the Full Moon Approach to the Hierarchy; let's read it together aloud:

"He who faces the light and stands within its radiance is blinded to the issues of the world of men; he passes on the Lighted Way to the great Centre of Absorption. But he who feels the urge to pass that way, yet loves his brother on the darkened path, revolves upon the pedestal of light and turns the other way.

"He faces towards the dark, and then the seven points of light within himself transmit the outward streaming light, and lo! the face of those upon the darkened way receives that light. For them the way is not so dark. Behind the warriors—twixt the light and dark—blazes the light of Hierarchy."

The meditation we do at these monthly meditation meetings is called the Full Moon Approach to the Hierarchy. Yet, for many people, meditation means a passive waiting, an anticipation that something will come to us, whether an idea or a feeling or some kind of contact with energy. The assumption is that we show up and wait for something to happen. But that attitude is negative, while the idea of an "approach to the Hierarchy" implies an active, positive stance.

The keynote of the new world religion, we're told, will be Divine Approach. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you", as the Bible says. The method on which this approach is based is the scientific and intelligent use of invocation and evocation, and its objective is revelation. But, lest we think this means we will receive some light upon our own journey, it's important to maintain a self-forgetful attitude, for we do this group meditation as a service. As the Ageless Wisdom puts it, "Revelation comes through me. I see it not."

The Affirmation of the Disciple is a mantram that expresses the essence of the Full Moon Approach to the Hierarchy. As we say it, let's visualise our alignment with all the groups, large and small, who are meeting as we are throughout the world in shared service to humanity.

I am a point of light within a greater Light.  
I am a strand of loving energy within the stream of Love divine.  
I am a point of sacrificial Fire, focussed within the fiery Will of God.

And thus I stand

I am a way by which men may achieve.  
I am a source of strength, enabling them to stand.  
I am a beam of light, shining upon their way.

And thus I stand.

And standing thus, revolve  
And tread this way the ways of men,  
And know the ways of God.

And thus I stand.

Some years the Capricorn festival falls in December; other years in January. This year, 2012, it both begins the year and ends it, with the December full moon in Capricorn falling in the middle of the Festival Week of the New Group of World Servers. This is a very special festival week which occurs only once every seven years, and when a full moon occurs during that week, “The opportunity will be most significant”, we’re told. That will happen at the Festival of Capricorn next December, but for now let’s focus on the present need and opportunity, in so far as we are able to grasp it.

Although we work with a sense of anticipation which comes with the beginning of a new year and a new cycle, “Capricorn is ever a sign of conclusion”, it’s said. “Of this, the mountain top is the symbol.” The popular concept of initiation is of triumph, victory, achievement – all expressions of culmination – but to reach that point, the initiate must plumb the depths of struggle and relinquishment.

The relinquishing of gain is an aspect of the Law of Sacrifice, one of the great governing principles of life on Earth, and there is an extremely thought-provoking discussion of the need to relinquish in the discussion of the Seven Laws of Group Life in *Esoteric Psychology, Volume II*. The Law of Sacrifice is one that has been mastered by all World Saviours, and although Pisces is the sign of the World Saviour, many World Saviours have been born – launched, so to speak – in Capricorn. “Esoterically”, Alice Bailey said, “all world Saviours and Sun Gods are born in Capricorn”, presumably because Capricorn commences with the winter solstice on December 21<sup>st</sup>, the moment in the annual cycle when the sun begins its movement northward, figuratively speaking, marking the renewal of increasing light in the northern hemisphere.

World Saviours traditionally are also born in a cave, which symbolises the density and crystallisation that the initiate in Capricorn must reach and pass beyond. The birth of Christ in a cave, symbolised in the Christmas story of December 25<sup>th</sup> depicts the first initiation, the birth of the Christ in the cave of the heart – the soul is not fully realised but only just beginning the long journey to the mountain top of initiation. In some ways, the cave seems to be an appropriate symbol for the point humanity has reached, for a cave is deeply buried in the earth, in densest matter – an apt symbol for the dense materialism that has so much of humanity in thrall. But the cave also symbolises the place where the Christ principle is born – in the cave of the heart – and we should find hope in this. It seems to be humanity’s way to have to plumb the depths of something to become satiated by it – filled up enough to willingly relinquish it. If so, perhaps the worldwide financial crisis and the increasingly visible and growing disparity between the haves and have-nots are all signs that we have reached the point of satiation and can leave the cave of materialism. Let us hope so.

In view of its earthy density, it’s only fitting that Capricorn rules the mineral kingdom. But crystallisation and “rock-hardness” apply not only to the mineral realm but to the realm of the lower mind as well. Not surprisingly, the third and fifth Rays of Intelligence and of Scientific Knowledge are both dominant in Capricorn, expressing the power of the mind but also its lower tendency to fixation and crystallisation. We all can probably call to mind the type of people described as “block-headed”, for they are unable to change their minds or budge from their opinions. Other people are unable to give up their resentments and grudges, their memories of perceived past injustices done to them. Whole societies can fall victim to this practice, nursing historic grievances done to their people even hundreds of years after the event. Even if we aren’t guilty of those extremes, many people cling to their views believing them to be exact

representations of reality, rather than personal memories likely biased by personal perceptions, glammers, prejudices and ideals. Uncompromising, unwilling to give way on what they claim are their “principles”, they create in effect road blocks to progress. And they do so knowingly, willfully, because – they’re just sure they are right. When we find that conviction rising up in ourselves – that we’re absolutely sure we’re right - we should be on guard, because it might be a sign of illusion and glamour.

Considering how hard it is to give up one’s most cherished views and opinions, this may explain why the Capricorn individual reaches the depths of crystallisation only on bended knee, and it’s no coincidence that, astrologically, Capricorn rules the knees in the human anatomy. An element of pride, of willfulness, has to be broken down first, as suggested in the contrast between the two key words for Capricorn. On the ordinary wheel of evolution, the key word is *Let ambition rule and let the door stand wide*. Only after the depths of ambition have been plumbed, and the worthlessness of worldly goals has been realised, does the key word of the soul in Capricorn ring true: *Lost am I in light supernal, yet on that light I turn my back*. At that point the lesson has been learned that “We rise by kneeling, we conquer by surrendering, we gain by giving up”. “Only when the Capricorn subject learns to kneel in all humility and offer his heart and life to the soul and to human service, can he be permitted to pass through the door of initiation”, the Tibetan said. “Only on his knees can he go through that door.”

There are numerous examples of this in the Tibetan’s teaching. Hercules overcame the nine-headed hydra or serpent of desire only when he was finally forced to his knees. From that position, only then could he lift up the hydra high into the air where, exposed to the light of the mind and the soul, it died.

Kneeling can be an expression of awe and wonder; it can also be a sign of respect, as when a subject kneels before a ruler. Kneeling can be a way to express remorse, as when Willy Brandt, the Chancellor West Germany, visited the scene of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1970, and dropped to his knees before the monument that had been erected on the site where millions of people had lost their lives in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943. He knew there were no words that could sum up the enormity of what had happened there – what had been done by the Germans to the people of Warsaw. So instead of giving a speech, he silently dropped to his knees in an expression of sorrow and apology. As Brandt later explained it, “On the abyss of German history and carrying the burden of the millions who were murdered, I did what people do when words fail them.”

His act of kneeling was called, in German, “Warsaw Genuflection”. Genuflection before the altar is a practice of the Catholic Church equivalent to the deep bow of the head that remains the supreme act of reverence in Eastern spiritual practice. The Zen Buddhist teacher Shunryu Suzuki, who wrote *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*, said “Bowing is a very serious practice. You should be prepared to bow, even in your last moment.” And this reminds us of the death of Gandhi, who bowed to his assailant at the moment of his death. “By bowing we are giving up ourselves. To give up ourselves means to give up our dualistic ideas...When you forget all your dualistic ideas, everything becomes your teacher, and everything can be the object of worship.

“When everything exists within your big mind, all dualistic relationships drop away. There is no distinction between heaven and earth, man and woman, teacher and disciple. Sometimes a man bows to a woman, sometimes a woman bows to a man. Sometimes the disciple bows to the master; sometimes the master bows to the disciple. A master who cannot bow to his disciple cannot bow to Buddha. Sometimes the master and disciple bow together to Buddha. Sometimes we may bow to cats and dogs.” In other words, you never know who your teacher might be.

So, to bow, to kneel, is to express humility. We Westerners, and especially Americans who place such a strong emphasis on our individuality and on the ideal of equality, don’t seem to be comfortable with the idea of humility. Yet it is absolutely central to the expansion of consciousness and to proper alignment.

The Tibetan defined humility as “an adjusted sense of right proportion which always accompanies a spiritual self-respect which forbids a disciple to stand anywhere upon the Path, except in his rightful place”. True humility has nothing to do with either false pride or inferiority. Recognition of where one stands in relation to one’s fellow aspirants and disciples is imperative, for it reveals those whom one can help, and those who stand as examples of achievement, as “wayshowers” of one’s next step in spiritual development. “Such recognitions must be faced and accepted and welcomed with gratitude, and then followed by *silence*”, the Tibetan says.

“Humility is one of the most potent factors in releasing the illuminating power of the mind”, he says. “The determined facing of the factual life and the stern recognition of truth – coldly, calmly and dispassionately – will greatly facilitate the calling in of the flood of illumination which will dispel glamour.” This doesn’t strip one of one’s personal integrity; in fact, it does just the opposite. Only in learning true humility, in accepting one’s place within the group and, eventually, as the horizons of the mind open up, one’s tiny atomic life within the Ocean of Being, does one discover one’s innate spiritual integrity. Regardless of where one stands on the Path, that integrity is unassailable. And it’s inseparable from humility.

The innate spiritual integrity of the human being is the reason that the Hierarchy allows humanity to learn in “the school of hard knocks” – earthly life. It’s said that “disciples learn to work with the plan by *working*” – by trial and error gained through experience. “The less evolved the disciple and worker, the larger the number of trials and the greater the number of errors”, the Tibetan says. “But the system works, for it is an eliminating as well as a perfecting process, and the residue which remains after due effort, can be trusted. You have those, finally, who remain and who are worthy of trust. Why does this system work? Because by its means the graces of humility, prompt obedience to soul injunction, and inner integrity are unfolded and developed. Where these are present, there will be found sureness of touch when humanity is contacted; sensitivity to the impression of the Hierarchy when that Hierarchy is seeking contact; and a right sense of proportion.”

*Lost am I in light supernal, yet on that light I turn my back.* So declares the disciple in Capricorn. Then, in Aquarius, the world Server is born, declaring *Water of life am I, poured forth for thirsty men.* And finally, in Pisces, the world Saviour vows, *I leave the Father’s Home, and turning back, I save.* This is the generosity of spirit found when one realises there is nothing to lose, and everything to gain, in giving all that one has and is.

Let us work in meditation now.