

Welcome to our meeting to celebrate the great festival of Wesak. Our meeting this evening is being broadcast over the Internet, so there are people around the world participating with us. If any of you are attending for the first time, you may be wondering what to expect, and you may also be wondering why we are celebrating Wesak this year about a month before most Buddhists. To take the latter question first, the answer is quite simple: our festival meetings are organized according to the rhythm of the full moon, and the Sun's passage through the astrological signs of the zodiac. So we celebrate the Festival of Wesak on the day of the full moon, when the Sun is in Taurus. Now, because in Western astrology, the Sun is said to be in Taurus from April 21st to May 22nd, and the full moon can occur on any of these dates, then the full moon will fall in April about one third of the time. For Buddhists, on the other hand, Wesak is fixed according to the lunar calendars of the respective countries in which most Buddhists live. In practice, this means that it is almost always in May.

And as for what to expect, we usually have a talk for 25-30 minutes first, and then we have a group meditation. For those who are familiar with Christian rituals (and we will be looking at one of the purposes of ritual a bit later), this is like the division between the period of readings and sermon, and the period of the actual sacrament. Now 'sacrament' is related etymologically both to 'sacred' and to 'sacrifice', and sacrifice is another idea we will be looking at later on.

Regarding the content of the talk, that will usually, though not always, involve some discussion of ideas found in the Ageless Wisdom or the Perennial Philosophy, which has many sources – classic mystical texts, theosophy, anthroposophy, the Agni Yoga teachings, and so on; and of course, the twenty four books of esoteric philosophy written by the founder of the Lucis Trust, Alice Bailey, in collaboration with a Tibetan teacher, whom you will hear me referring to simply as "the Tibetan".

As it happens, this evening the Alice Bailey writings will be used quite extensively. In common with all substantial bodies of work, there may be terms that are unfamiliar, or familiar terms used in unfamiliar ways. Don't worry too much about following every last word. The main purpose of the introductory talk is not to inform, but rather to give the group present here, and also our online listeners, a point on the mental plane where our thoughts can be broadly united, so that we can move together into the phase of group meditation. It's this phase of group meditation, as an act of service to humanity, which is our main purpose here tonight.

Before we continue, let's just take a few moments of silence, and then we will say together the Mantram of the New Group of World Servers, which is on the card, and concluding with one OM

May the Power of the one Life pour through the group of all true servers
May the Love of the one Soul characterize the lives of all who seek to aid the Great Ones
May I fulfil my part in the one Work through self-forgetfulness, harmlessness and right speech.

OM

We have just used a mantram, or actually, two mantrams, as OM, the sacred word, is considered a mantram on its own. A mantram is a sound, word or group of words considered capable of producing transformation. The power of sound as a creative factor is a theme present throughout the Ageless Wisdom. Mantrams are often used during specific rituals or ceremonies, and, according to Alice Bailey and a number of other writers, at the time of the full moon of Taurus each year, there is a great ceremony that takes place in the Himalayas. The chief participants in this ceremony are the members of the spiritual Hierarchy, known in Hinduism as the Rishis, in Buddhism as the

Boddhisattvas, and in Christianity as the Communion of Saints. Their great leader, the Christ, is the main co-celebrant, together with His spiritual Brother, the Buddha, Who is said to re-appear very briefly at this ceremony, descending from Shamballa, the centre where the Will of God is known, to confer a special blessing.

It is said that when the Buddha reaches the site of the ritual, “a great mantram, used only once a year, at the Festival, is intoned by the Christ... This Invocation sets up a great vibration or thought current which is of such potency that it reaches up from the group of aspirants, disciples or initiates who employ it, to God Himself. It marks the supreme moment of intensive spiritual effort throughout the entire year, and the spiritual vitalisation of humanity and the spiritual effects last throughout the succeeding months.” (THE WESAK FESTIVAL: A Technique of Spiritual Contact, p.8; download (wesak-booklet.html) from www.lucistrust.org/en/meetings_and_events/three_major_spiritual_festivals/wesak)

This passage from *THE WESAK FESTIVAL: A Technique of Spiritual Contact* reveals the tremendous power of sound. The Tibetan offers some insight into how this potency is achieved in the following two passages from *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*:

“Words of Power, ancient mantrams (such as the Lord's Prayer) and the Great Invocation are only effective if used upon the mental plane and with the power of a controlled mind—focussed on their intent and meaning—behind the spoken effort. They then become potent. When said with the power of the soul as well as with the directed attention of the mind, they automatically become dynamically effective.” (Ext. p.145)

“Words of Power (and this is true also of the O.M.) are all of second ray origin. This is the ray of the manifestation of consciousness. They are, therefore, intended for *soul use* because the soul is the expression of the second aspect of divinity, and only the soul can really employ these Words and sounds and thus produce the desired results which are always in line with the divine Plan. It is frequently forgotten that they must be used by the soul in a dynamic manner, involving the serious recognition of the *will aspect*. The Great Invocation, the O.M. and all such Words of Power must go forth from the soul (whose nature is love and whose purpose is solely group good), backed by or ‘occultly propelled forth’ (to use a translation of an almost untranslatable occult idea) by the dynamic will aspect, and carried outwards as an integrated thoughtform upon a stream of living, illumined mental substance. This process therefore brings into activity the will, the love and the intelligence of the [one] who is using these words and formulas.” (Ext. p.145)

The Tibetan notes that, even when someone has integrated these three controlling factors of will, love and intelligence within themselves, as far as is possible at any given point in evolution, still a gap sometimes occurs. The created thoughtform may still be retained upon the mental plane because the brain (the receiving and distributing centre) is incapable of the needed dual activity. The soul on its own plane must simultaneously retain awareness of the intent, meaning and purpose of the formula being used and, at the same time, carry on the task of sending forth the potency, hidden yet conveyed by the Words or sounds. And it must do this through the medium of the mind and the brain. This is one of the objectives of all meditation work, but one which is not emphasized, as it is a sequential happening and not an objective. Effectiveness is, therefore, dependent upon a developed and trained integration between five factors: soul, mind, desire, brain, and the spoken Word or sound. This shows the great difficulty of using mantrams correctly, and the need for years of disciplined training.

We’ve focused so far on the immense potency of mantrams and invocations, when used correctly. Precisely because they are so powerful, the Tibetan emphasizes the need for caution, because through experimentation with invocations, the method of calling the devas, the embodied forces of the different planes of existence, will be discovered. He notes that for the unprotected this can lead to disaster. “Hence the necessity to inculcate pure living, the learning of protective invocations and formulas, and the power of the church and of Masonry to protect. Forget

not that... the invocations that call a deva may, if sounded inaccurately, call a being that will work havoc. *In ritual lies protection.* Hence the emphasis laid upon church forms and on the Masonic rituals,—an emphasis which will *increase* and not grow less as the years slip by. The force of invocations will be known later.” (*Esoteric Psychology I*, p.126, *emph. added*)

The idea of the protective power of ritual is expanded in *The Rays and the Initiations*, particularly as it relates to group work. The Tibetan explains this in the context of the Wesak festival ritual. Thus we read:

“The group can be, and frequently is, responsive to the ‘bright centre,’ Shamballa, where the initiate by himself and in his own essential identity cannot so respond. The individual must be protected by the group from the terrific potencies which emanate from Shamballa. These must be stepped down for him by the process of distribution, so that their impact is not focussed in any one or all of his centres but is shared by all the group members. Here is the clue to the significance of group work. One of its major functions, esoterically speaking, is to absorb, share, circulate, and then distribute energy.

This process of protection and of distribution is one of the functions of the great meeting of all the Hierarchy, under the aegis of the three Great Lords (the Manu, the Mahachohan and the Christ) in that high and sacred valley in the Himalayas where annually—after due preparation—the Hierarchy makes contact with Shamballa and a relationship is then set up between the ‘bright and living centre’ and the ‘radiating and magnetic centre,’ in order that the ‘acquiescent waiting centre’ [Humanity] may be stimulated to move forward upon the ladder of evolution. *Even the Hierarchy itself needs the protection of its full membership* in order rightly to absorb the incoming energies, and later wisely to distribute the forces of the divine will in the three worlds where lies Their major responsibility.” (*Rays and Initiations*, pp. 68-9, *emph. added*)

By our participation tonight in group meditation, we are linking up subjectively with the ceremony in the Himalayas. This awe-inspiring responsibility calls us to a measure of sacrifice. While the idea of sacrifice has been associated with religious ritual from time immemorial, the kind of sacrifice asked of us today is not, of course, the sacrifice of a physical animal. It is instead the sacrifice of our preoccupation with the affairs of the lower self, the personality. Even then, we may be inclined to see this sacrifice through the prism of the personality, as renunciation. But according to the Tibetan, this isn’t quite right. He says, “Sacrifice is, technically speaking, the achievement of a state of bliss and of ecstasy because it is the realisation of another divine aspect, hidden hitherto by both the soul and the personality. It is understanding and recognition of the will-to-good which made creation possible and inevitable, and which was the true cause of manifestation.” (*Rays and Initiations*, p.492)

The Tibetan discusses sacrifice with regard to the opportunity presented at the Wesak festival in some depth.

He notes: “The great need today is the development of the intuition and the discrimination of the disciples of the world. They must learn to sense the higher vision, to respond to the day of opportunity, and to achieve the higher conscious relationship, no matter at what cost to the lower self. In doing this they will have to remember that the lower nature, owing to its intimate close nature, will seem abnormally attractive and can be transcended only at infinite cost. The intuition must therefore be developed in the group, and the sense of values must be far more adequately adjusted, before it can measure up to requirements and fulfill its function which is to inaugurate the New Age. The downpouring of spiritual force at the time of the Wesak Festival has for its objective the stimulation of the intuition of the grouped disciples, aspirants and men of goodwill.” (*THE WESAK FESTIVAL: A Technique of Spiritual Contact*, p.12)

Further on, the Tibetan says: “Those aspirants and disciples who can train themselves to the realisation of an

increased spiritual responsibility, and who can preserve an inner quietness and an attitude of focussed attention, can be swept into this tide of spiritual force and thus serve humanity's need. As transmitters, they can meet that need; as interpreters, they can increase the capacity of mankind to respond and to understand.

A call has been sent out by the entire Hierarchy of Masters to all disciples and to the New Group of World Servers to prepare themselves each full moon of [Taurus] for an intensive holy month of accelerated service. They appeal to all of us to cooperate, as fully as possible, in an intensive effort to increase the receptivity of humanity to the new forces which can be released and perform their benevolent synthesising work at the coming Wesak Festival.

Should the Buddha and the Christ and the focussed Hierarchy (with the aid of all disciples and aspirants) succeed in producing what may be regarded as a form of planetary unification, and thus produce the needed open channel, it will still remain for all of us who can understand to act as the mediums for the transmission of life and light. We can keep the channel open between the world thinkers and workers and the inner spiritual group of Knowers and Servers." (THE WESAK FESTIVAL: A Technique of Spiritual Contact, p.13)

Finally, He notes: "The two days of preparation are to be known as 'Days of Renunciation and Detachment.' The day of the Festival is to be known as the 'Day of Safe-Guarding,' whilst the two succeeding days are to be called the 'Days of Distribution.' This demands five days of the most intensive effort in service, leading to the renunciation of all within ourselves which could hinder our usefulness as servers and as channels of spiritual force. It means that after due preparation, dedication and upward striving for the first two days, on the day of the Festival itself we simply regard ourselves as the recipients of as much of that inflowing spiritual force as we can contain. As channels, we must be prepared to forget ourselves in the service of *touching, containing and holding* force for the rest of humanity. We must learn to regard the day of the Festival itself as the day of silence—a subjective silence and inner peace that can be preserved unbroken though we may at the same time be serving with our speech and our active interest in others. During the day, two thoughts only will hold our constant attention. These are the need of our fellowmen and the necessity of providing a group channel whereby the spiritual forces may become available. We shall attempt to hold ourselves steadily in the light of our own souls, and thereby begin to work as souls, whose interests are ever with the group and not with the individual, and whose consciousness is that of the whole and not of the part.

On the two succeeding days, the focus of our attention should be turned away from ourselves to the outer world, and our effort will be to pass on that measure of spiritual energy that we have been successful in contacting. (THE WESAK FESTIVAL: A Technique of Spiritual Contact, pp.13-14)

So let us now turn to our subjective participation in this great planetary ritual of blessing through the power of sanctified sound, striving to leave behind everything in our consciousness that might hinder our imaginative cooperation. Our seed thought is, "I see, and when the eye is opened, all is light."