

The Crucible of Fire

Good evening everyone and welcome to the Festival of Leo; a warm welcome also to the many friends and co-workers who are linking up with us today around the world via BlogTalkRadio.

Those of you who are familiar with astrology will know that Leo is one of three fire signs, in company with Aries and Sagittarius; furthermore, Leo is considered to be the preeminent fire sign at this time, suggesting an unusual potency and capacity to influence planetary consciousness - not least through the agency of the human kingdom. The human kingdom, as we know, is characterised by the quality of self-awareness, a mental faculty which reaches its high-point in an awareness of the soul or of the group, leading the human unit eventually into that still higher kingdom in nature, the 5th kingdom, the Hierarchy or the kingdom of souls.

The lower keynote of Leo is "I am" which is symbolic of the self-interested personality, of the unit aware of himself and at the centre of his own universe. Rene Descartes in his famous statement 'I think therefore I am' encapsulates this intensely human phase wherein the mind is appropriated, thus endowing the man with memory and anticipation, that is to say, with a sense of self in time and space. With this comes a gradual recognition of plan and purpose, which, when present, is said to truly indicate a man who is self-conscious. We are not here talking of Self-consciousness, with a capital S, or soul-consciousness, but rather the stage of definite mental polarisation; that stage which is often termed in occult literature 'the stage of the integrated personality.' It is sobering to realise that the majority of men are still almost entirely led through life by their desire natures. This desire-consciousness, whilst alloying itself to a certain degree of mental essence - forming Kama-Manas - is not strictly in the same category as true self-conscious awareness. The agent of Kama-Manas is still automatic in his activities, blown like a leaf in the wind of desire - whether he knows it or not; he has not the long-range capacity for planning and purpose in life as has the truly self-conscious individual or integrated personality.

In contrast to this we have the higher keynote of Leo, an aspect of the Leo quality which we shall endeavour to work with this evening during our group meditation. This higher keynote for disciples is: "I am that and that am I" which is essentially symbolic of an awareness of the Whole, a wholly decentralised attitude which knows no separating walls, no boundaries, no glamour or illusory sense of thou and I.

We are told that the Leo impulse towards true self-consciousness has helped to produce the many leaders of men throughout history - whether labelled as dictators or visionary and liberal statesmen. The Tibetan suggests that the horoscopes of such individuals invariably evidence a significant Leo influence, and in all cases we witness a powerful nucleus of personality force, capable of magnetising, to a greater or lesser degree, a body of men into group formation. Of course the stereotypical dictator, a relic of the Piscean Age we might say, is rapidly going out of fashion in the increasingly enlightened consciousness of humanity - and yet if we are to be balanced and fair in our judgement we should at least acknowledge the fact that many so called dictators have in fact contributed to the serving of the Plan - even if unconsciously. At times these individuals have been the focal point of a much needed national unity and cohesion where this was previously lacking, even if in certain cases ambitions have spilled over beyond the ideal of national integrity and integration into a form of international aggression. The real need today of course, and this is being increasingly recognised as we move inexorably into the New Age of Aquarius, is for leaders with a world vision and a definite sense of the will-to-love - a basic tendency towards the ideal of the greatest good for the greatest number. Leo, the sign of self-awareness and of vigorous self-

assertion, and Aquarius, the sign of group-consciousness and awareness of the whole, are to be found at opposite poles of the zodiac, and yet Leo prepares the ground for the consummation of self-consciousness in Aquarius - a Self-consciousness on a higher turn of the spiral, a consciousness in fact of the soul, of the group, and of the Whole.

Higher Interlude

Now let us pause for a few moments and align with the wider group of 'souls and servers' who are working unceasingly for the uplift of humanity and the unfoldment of right relationships as *they* express themselves upon a planetary scale; then let us sound together the *Affirmation of the Disciple*:

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.

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Returning to our consideration of Leo as a fire sign, it is interesting to note that both fire and water are broadly recognised as related to the processes of purification. It is no surprise then that the three fire signs Leo, Aries and Sagittarius, along with the three water signs Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces, are intimately linked with phases of purification in the life of the aspirant and of the disciple. Not only this, but the same can be said of planets and races, as we find in the annals of the Ageless Wisdom reference to the changing face of the globe and the destruction of various root-races through the agency of fire and water.

An elect membership of each race is said to be preserved in each instance in some protected corner of the globe, in order to act as the seed for the new and coming race; the rest of the population, it is claimed, at the command of the Manu, are sacrificed in their physical forms that their eternal selves might enter the new race at some distant time - into a vehicle and society more expressive of the higher consciousness. In the Secret Doctrine we learn that twice have the races been destroyed by fire - that is to say by volcano and earthquake - and twice by water. The race of Atlanteans was of course dispatched through submergence in water - water being the symbol of the emotional or astral nature characteristic of the Atlantean consciousness - and old Lemuria is said to have been ravaged by the effects of volcano and earthquake.

Though not wanting to induce any sleepless nights amongst any members of the audience here tonight, there are prophesies to the effect that the present race faces the potential of cataclysm by fire once again. Recalling that the Atlantean race perished under water - a symbolic event directly related to their astral consciousness - it is of real interest to note that fire is the symbol of the mind,

an aspect of the instrument of the soul which should reach its zenith during this current race - the Aryan. The Tibetan is rather more circumspect on this point, suggesting that much depends upon humanity as to whether cataclysm or divine embodiment will be the catalyst for change at the given hour. This is perhaps easier to appreciate and reconcile when we recall the Tibetan's claim that the recent world war could have been fought out entirely upon the mental plane had certain opportunities been embraced. As we know, the destructive energies did not remain isolated upon the mental plane and instead spilled over, so to speak, and found expression and outlet upon the physical plane with terrible effect. This at least highlights and corroborates the fact of human free-will and the importance of embracing opportunity.

The phenomenon of the war itself was an out-picturing of purification by fire. The mineral kingdom was used to devastating effect - no doubt karmically impelled - and much of the civilised world was destroyed through fire. A startling example of this was the intense aerial bombing of British and German cities which, together with the dropping of millions of incendiary devices, destroyed much through the agency of Fire. Though no doubt difficult to appreciate at the time, a great planetary cleansing was in process and many barriers and separating walls were swept aside through the application of fire on higher levels of consciousness - particularly in the realms of thought and idealism. The physical plane after all is but a symbolic out-picturing and effect of a definite inner and causative reality.

London was a major casualty in this aerial bombardment and of definite occult interest is the fact that London is governed in its soul aspect by the fire sign Leo. London is a major planetary centre and has been obviously very active in this capacity for two to three hundred years. It is interesting to note then that London - ruled by a fire sign - has been to a large extent destroyed by fire before, the Great Fire of London in 1666. At this time 13,000 houses were destroyed by fire along with 87 parish churches and even St Paul's Cathedral (a symbolic landmark that incidentally and remarkably survived the bombing of London unscathed). It is interesting to speculate upon the occult significance of this repeated impact by fire upon the planetary centre we call London, and one wonders how this out-picturing might relate to the evolving inner consciousness of the planetary life - Who is Himself passing through the burning ground in preparation for a particularly demanding initiation. We do know that in the aftermath of the destruction of 1666 London was bound for greatness as the focal point of the great Commonwealth of Nations - a major experiment in planetary consciousness - and, since the World War, London has continued to be a significant focal point for globalisation. The United Kingdom has for the most part dropped its fascination with empire and has turned its face increasingly towards world salvage. The centres after all determine the activities of the outer form.

It is important to recognise that "fire ever works by the destruction of all that separates through sacrifice." In the case of the various races already touched upon, some otherwise insuperable barrier necessitated the evocation of cataclysm, to the effect that a new chapter could unfold in the story of the Planetary Life. Nature is prone to mimic the same process, as indeed we see in the changing of the seasons leading to birth, growth, decline and death in successive cycles, and also in the periodic clearing of large swathes of land through fire, thus leaving behind a nutrient rich soil ready for the influx of new life. In the vicinity of river deltas we have the same process effected by water due to flooding, and then the receding of those same waters leaving behind a nutrient rich silt. In Atlantis we are told that Black Magic had become rife and that this was one of the considerations which lead to the flooding of the race with the salvation of but few who were deemed of adequate purity. In our Aryan Age it is not difficult to imagine how the lower concrete mind, as it becomes increasingly dominant, could become a menace to the planet as a whole - for the mind, as the occult platitude states, can be the slayer of the Real. Of course, if the development of the mind can be paralleled by a concerted effort to turn the mental principle increasingly towards the light of the

soul then perhaps divine embodiment, as spoken of by the Tibetan, may be the destiny of men rather than cataclysm.

We are told that the approach to unity is ever through the destruction or sacrifice of the lower. Two seemingly irreconcilable principles can only be transcended through the recognition of a higher principle which includes or embraces the lower two. At this time of increasing recognition of ideas, ideals and principles, all vying for dominance through the agency of groups of advocates - groups of idealists - it is important for us to remember this hierarchy of principles, for a hierarchy it truly is. Thus we see on a lower turn of the spiral how the disciple must also learn to control and subordinate his lower principles or vehicles through the use of a higher one. The astral or desire body must therefore become subordinate to the mental vehicle as the first stage of the path of discipleship is trod. As the three-fold mental plane, the flowing river of Fire, is traversed, the lower mind must increasingly surrender itself to the light of the soul and eventually to the Will of the Triad.

In all cases the subordinated lower vehicles remain active, yet there is a change of quality in that activity; each is conditioned by a higher influence or fire. This brings to mind the familiar phrase 'fight fire with fire' which has, in this context, a deeply occult connotation. Fire is the designated symbol of many 'things' but fundamentally it is the symbol of Energy, of Spirit, of Will in all grades of manifestation. In other words, Fire is the essence of everything, a fact recognised by the Alchemists and Fire-philosophers of mediaeval times, and which coloured their language and presentation of the Perennial Truths. According to the Alchemists, application of fire is the prime method of conversion or transmutation - everything that touches fire is changed, often beyond recognition. This is as true of fire in its outer phenomenal manifestation as it is of fire as a Spiritual Reality - the later being the true preoccupation of the experimental Alchemists. The matter of every plane is impregnated with fire; indeed the matter of every plane IS Fire, because as we know, Spirit and matter are synonymous terms; matter is spirit at its lowest level and spirit is matter at its most exalted. We can see then that the energy of one plane must be subordinated, conditioned, raised up, call it what you will, by the energy of the next higher. Thus, the disciple, in the process of purification must "fight fire with fire." The higher light or fire always has the potential to obliterate the lower light. Hence the value of certain techniques which utilise the creative imagination in order to achieve this, such as the Technique of Substitution and the effort to continually act 'as if,' which are specific methods suggested in the teachings of Alice Bailey. These are techniques which aid the disciple in making contact with a higher fire, thus setting alight his lower principles, burning away the dross and all that separates - eventually liberating him into the sphere of the higher light.

This recognition of fire as the symbol of energy, of force, of will, of all that is, the essence of all things, explains why fire has become such a ubiquitous symbol. There is nothing in Heaven or Earth that cannot be reduced to Fire. Like the Prodigal Son, matter of all grades is working its way back to the Fathers house. Eventually, fire by friction and solar fire will blend and merge into the One fire - Electric Fire, Monadic Essence, Spirit. At that point the planetary story will have been told, the great Logoic meditation will have reached its conclusion and a planetary pralaya, that long period of repose and rest before another phase of inevitable activity commences, will beckon that Great Life in Whom we currently live and move and have our being.

Let us now turn our attention to today's meditation - invoking the available energies of Leo and playing with fire so to speak, using the directing potency of the seed-thought for disciples in this sign: *'I am That and That am I'*

Full Moon - Tomorrow morning at 01.46 GMT (02.46 BST)