

**Festival of Leo, London, August 2017**  
***The Expansion of Perception***

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Good evening friends. Tonight's meeting in Leo celebrates the power of illumination. The inpouring light from the higher centres is of such an intensity that it eventually causes a shift of identity from the "I am" state of individual consciousness to the "I am That" state of inclusive, group consciousness which is so needed in the world today. As the polarisation of the human race shifts towards a mental, intellectual orientation, the growth of the separative "I am" consciousness is likely to increase – something which will require careful handling. The increasing Aquarian energies however will help to counter this and the spirit of relationship and universality will steadily expand.

Leo is one of the fixed cross signs of discipleship and by visualizing this even-armed cross to the point of immersion, the disciple can take a stand within the cross and become it. That which once stood outside of one's self as a symbol is transcended into a living reality. This transcendence of the "I am" stage imparts an identification with the group and a sense of the One life that pervades them all. At a later stage, the initiate will symbolically stand in the heart of the sun, seeing and experiencing the life, love and light of God streaming out in its essential nature before being refracted into the myriad of forms that populate time and space.

This spiritual identity finds expression in a powerful mantram, the Affirmation of the Disciple – so ancient that its original wording predates both Sanskrit and Senza. Let's take a few moments of reflection and then say it together:

*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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This affirmation of the disciple encapsulates the subjective spirit of the education systems of the world. For those who have a developed lower mind and have exhausted the "I am" experience, higher education can train them to think in terms of wholes, preparing them to demonstrate the keynote: "I am That." Through the spirit of this approach, tremendous changes can be initiated and human life transformed. The

Tibetan tells us that “through the pressure of education (second ray energy), through the growth of the concept of synthesis (first ray energy), and through the correct use of energy (fifth ray energy), this world can be brought into a condition of preparedness for the externalisation of the Hierarchy.” All these rays are present in Leo – the love-wisdom 2<sup>nd</sup> ray of the Sun, the first ray of power and synthesis and the 5<sup>th</sup> ray of knowledge – and they pour through this constellation.

Education could reflect this by training the lower mind as well as guiding understanding towards the use of the true reasoning power of love as its creative agent. This move away from dependence upon intellectual power alone will help humanity to reconnect the individual mind with the universal mind and tune into the stars and constellations of a cosmos of love and purpose. This progression beyond the “I am” consciousness depends to some extent on a recognition that modern education does not develop the brain’s right and left hemispheres equally and subscribes to the popular misconception that the left hemisphere is for reasoning while the right half is for emotion.

This view is challenged in the book, *The Master and His Emissary – The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*. Its author Dr. McGilchrist writes, “We now know that every type of function – including reason, emotion, language and imagery – is subserved not by one hemisphere alone, but by both... The division of the brain into two hemispheres is essential to human existence, making possible incompatible versions of the world, with quite different priorities and values.” He continues by noting that the difference between the two hemispheres does not lie in which skills each hemisphere possesses, but rather that they *pay attention* in fundamentally different ways. The left hemisphere processing details and the right attending to the whole picture. According to Dr. McGilchrist, the left half of the brain is narrowly focused and the right more broadly directed, being alert to what is going on in the wider environment. The analogy is given of a chicken wherein, the left hemisphere of its brain is engrossed looking for seed in the dirt, while its right is alert to its surroundings, making sure it doesn’t become someone else’s lunch! The left hemisphere sees things in isolation and only sees what it expects to see. It is this side of the brain that is primarily exercised where education is knowledge-based and specialised facts and figures predominate. Such education makes it difficult to bring in fresh ideas and perspectives so there is little scope for more creative visions of the world and of understanding who we are as human beings. The left hemisphere is fixed in its way of thinking and needs to be in control, whereas the right sees the whole, not needing to label and know everything. Dr. McGilchrist adds “*happiness comes from social connectedness and a sense of purpose beyond the immediate.*” It follows then, that the malaise and depression of many is perpetuated by the predominance of left brain emphasis of the secular world with an accompanying lack of vision and sense of purpose.

One of the effects of meditation is to bring the two halves of the brain into a mutually resonant state so that they work as one whole. In connection with this, a recent Arcane School letter considered how meditation concentrates and empowers the substance of the mind, the chitta – just as the sun’s rays grow in power when they are focussed onto a piece of paper by a magnifying glass. In the same vein, focusing the mind on any truth, objective or subjective, establishes a link between the perceiver and the perceived. The greater the concentration is, the more stable will be this ‘mind

bridge' and the ability to merge the "I" consciousness with the subject of attention. To the extent that this is achieved, the perceiver then becomes a living expression of the truth contacted. According to the intensity of sustained concentration, so is the measure of truth expressed in the lower worlds.

The power to illumine, so characteristic of Leo, can serve to unite the way the two hemispheres of the brain work. It can reveal underlying synthesis and can bestow a sense of spiritual destiny and hope. It is now time when humanity needs to focus on positive thinking. As is stated in the Bible: *"Whatsoever things are beautiful, whatsoever things are sound and of good rapport, think on these things."* If we have been conditioned by the Unreal, it takes the dissipation of glamour to lift ourselves out onto higher ground. It takes the courage, illumination and self-mastery inherent in Leo to face the shadows in the world today.

These shadows are more prevalent than at any other time in world history and without the cultivation of a sense of the Real with all its beauty and promise, there is a real danger that people may despair. The news is full of revelations of corruption, past misdeeds and crises in most areas of human endeavour. Many today understand the concept of "energy follows thought", of thoughts becoming self-fulfilling prophecies and of how even the very act of observing affects the outcome of scientific experiments. Nevertheless public thinking is constantly being impressed by negative and unwholesome thoughts and images. Obvious examples include the media's trend towards so-called reality shows displaying the coarsest of human behaviour and feeding the public's obsession with celebrity culture. There is also a trend toward ever more violent TV programmes and films with their glamorous portrayal. Dark stories penetrate the subconscious and can bring about a coarsening of feeling and even the imitation of thinking and behaviours in some cases.

The beleaguered aspirants of the world have no need to watch such things, for entertainment or educational purposes, because they are living their own dramas of darkness, glamour and fear. As Dane Rudhyar noted, the "inevitability of shadows is the burden of the sunlight"<sup>1</sup> just as it is the burden of all divine identities who are identified with light and life. They must create shadow as well as illumination in the souls and minds for the light they summon upon a person or a culture calls forth a shadow in the unconscious. The radiance that illumines the path to tomorrow, he says, "fills the ways of yesterday with ghosts and with fears, with doubts and resentment". Ultimately the power to illumine the mind by the soul becomes a lens to focus the glory of the sun upon the past. Efforts inevitably evoke a shadow within his psychic depth, just as the disciple has to face the ultimate test of the Dweller. Failure to face one's shadows leads to the projection of the shadow cast by the subconscious onto another. This is described in terms of the eternal drama of light, of life, of power and of love.

Those strongly influenced by Leo can be so driven by the intensity of this feeling of light and shadow that they may be unable to face the shadows within their own depths. Dane Rudhyar expands on this, *"Instead he strides across the world-shadow, burdening many of the most avid recipients of his light with his own dark images. In order to hold the enslaved in willing subjection to the darkness of blind devotion, the Leo autocrat is compelled to stage one grandiose drama after another. He fills his world with gestures and slogans, with heroics and betrayals of truth, with triumphs and strident war-cries. His crusades to the sun*

*advance over the piled remains of his wasted devotees."* The solution is to meet the world with quiet simplicity because the essence of drama is complexity, and without tragedy there are no heroic deeds. Some person, or group, must be dark and evil so that they can be overcome to prove heroism. In time there must come a stillness of heart, a restfulness in truth, that simplicity of action which transfigures and which soothes. To be simple is to overcome duality and drama and to be of one essence only. Although this description of an "I Am" consciousness is in itself illuminating, it is helpful to see how progression in the light of soul consciousness occurs alongside the revelation of the Dweller on the Threshold, that man-made creation which must be faced and destroyed at an advanced stage on the path. The process of projection onto others and of the revelation of that which is dark being a natural consequence of the evocation of light, provides explanations when reflecting upon the world scene.

Incorrect perception through projection is touched upon in the nature of auras which are described in the teachings as "spheres of influence". One such sphere is the fiery mane or aura of the lion in Leo – when it is in touch with solar light, it sees clearly and radiates its quality purely and powerfully. The whole subject of auras, however, is today misconstrued and is another area where projection takes place. The seer is described as contacting an impression which is translated into the symbology of colour, whereas there is no colour present. Seeing an aura comes down to a state of awareness where a colour or even light is registered, but what has really been recorded is the quality of a sphere of radiatory activity. This occurs when the seer's own individual sphere of radiatory activity is of the same nature and quality as that contacted. Mostly these are astral vibrations of a person or group which are registered through the medium of their own astral body.

Perception is a key factor in our identity and our understanding of truth of course. Do we believe what we see or see what we believe? Clearly, before the faculty of mental perception of the subjective worlds can be developed by us, we need to construct a mechanism to contact Reality. What we see and how far depends upon where we stand on the ladder of evolution. Focused in the lower mind, we see doubts and obstacles, while the higher mind illumines the way ahead with greater simplicity and clarity. Nevertheless for many who believe in the reality of the subtle worlds there is still a struggle to make it more real than the physical. Everyday events and problems remain at the foreground of daily living. While "Energy follows thought" is a basic tenet of the Raja Yoga system it is also true of images of "fancy" as they are described by Patanjali. These are thought forms constructed out of the quality of our desire and are therefore not Real. There are also the thoughts created by nations, groups etc. In fact the Tibetan notes that any group of thinkers creates thought forms which can add to the "great illusion" just as all man-made creations add to the "Dweller on the Threshold" – that entity held together by lower energies since incarnation began and which must be removed by the purificatory fires.

It is only the Soul, the divine Perceiver, which can illumine this Shadow or Dweller for what it is – a creature of fancy, a delusional entity which can only be dissipated by what is described as "supreme exertion" – persistent application of the spiritual will. This short and simple sutra in *The Light of the Soul* is described as being of the most profound significance and studied by high initiates who are learning the nature of the creative process of the planet, and who are concerned with the dissipation of planetary maya.

While the pilgrim in Leo begins his quest in the “expression of experience to justify knowledge”, when he has drunk his fill of these waters he comes under the influence of his opposing sign, Aquarius. Then comes understanding that the use of experience is to make the gained knowledge a factor in service and a recognition of a higher truth which is revealed through his own actions and service. Revelation is itself a paradox for what is revealed has always existed – that which has been awakened is just the capacity to perceive the ever present. On this journey to expanded perception, through the burning ground of the experimental nature of Leo, the Lion meets the Water bearer and the merger of their two nature creates one whole and completes the picture.

At this peak time of the full moon, we can employ our creative imaginations to assist the Hierarchy with letting in the light to reveal and then dissipate the shadows of separative thinking. By adding our light to that of the planetary heart centre we can join its great service by simultaneously facing in two directions – oriented towards the Plan as well as distributing light to the dark, unredeemed places of human consciousness. In our meditation now, we can see ourselves together with others across the world, all working as “intensified lights” within the stream of Love divine and as points of sacrificial fire bringing life to those who struggle in darkness. An extract from *The Old Commentary* summarizes this work in the following evocative images:

*"This is the path for all who seek the light. First form, and all its longing. Then pain. Then the assuaging waters and the appearance of a little fire. The fire grows, and heat is then active within the tiny sphere and does its fiery work. Moisture likewise is seen; dense fog, and to the pain is added sad bewilderment, for they who use the fire of mind during the early stage are lost within a light illusory.*

*"Fierce grows the heat; next comes the loss of power to suffer. When this stage has been outgrown, there comes the shining of the unobstructed sun and the clear bright light of truth. This is the path back to the hidden Centre.*

*"Use pain. Call for the fire, oh, pilgrim in a strange and foreign land. The waters wash away the mud and slime of nature's growth. The fires burn the hindering forms which seek to hold the pilgrim back and so they bring release. The living waters, as a river, sweep the pilgrim to the Father's Heart. The fires destroy the veil hiding the Father's Face." <sup>2</sup>*

1. *Gifts of the Spirit*, Dane Rudhyar.

2. *Discipleship in the New Age*, Vol. I.