

**FESTIVAL OF CANCER**  
**New York, NY**  
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Welcome to the Festival of Cancer. For those of you who might be new to these meetings, we hold them every month for the purpose of group meditation as a service to humanity. They aren't astrological lectures, or lectures of any sort. The opening talk is intended simply to focus the group mind, to unify our consciousness as a group, before we go into our meditation. The objective is to be of service, not to receive personal enlightenment or to ask anything for ourselves. Our only objective is to serve by creating a channel in consciousness through meditation for the spiritual energies of Light and Love which pour into the world at the time of the full moon. Why then? Because at that moment the Sun, symbolic of the soul and of the Kingdom of Souls, known in the Ageless Wisdom as the Hierarchy of Masters, and the Earth, representative of Humanity, stand in open, unimpeded alignment. That direct line of *approach*—by humanity to the Hierarchy and by the Hierarchy to humanity—is possible at the time of the full moon each month, and that's why these meditations are called an "approach to the Hierarchy" for the purpose of "Letting in the Light".

We know that we don't work alone, but in conjunction with our fellow meditators, meeting as we are in groups large and small throughout the world. So let us take a moment to silently atune with the worldwide group, seeing our group fused and merged within the greater group and dedicated to the service of the Plan by *letting in the light*. Then let us say together the Gayatri, the ancient prayer of the path trodden by aspirants throughout the ages.

**GAYATRI**

*O Thou Who givest sustenance to the universe,  
From Whom all things proceed,  
To Whom all things return,  
Unveil to us the face of the true Spiritual Sun  
Hidden by a disc of golden Light  
That we may know the Truth And do our whole duty  
As we journey to Thy sacred feet.*

The spiritual path, symbolised in the progression around the zodiacal wheel, is esoterically a depiction of the journey of the soul, the mediator between pure spirit, and matter, the form aspect. Cancer is allied with matter and with the mother aspect of all forms. Coming as it does after the higher interlude of Aries, Taurus and Gemini, Cancer is the door, the entry point into the physical plane for the expression of spirit in form.

This helps us understand why it's said that in Cancer lies hid the whole problem of the Law of Rebirth. Rebirth or reincarnation, once confined to Eastern spiritual beliefs, is a widely recognised concept now. But there are many variations of belief in the continuity of life, ranging from the belief that rebirth enables consciousness to progress, to the belief in the transmigration of souls, so that a human being might end up a mouse or some other low form of life in the next. This is contrary to the teaching of the Ageless Wisdom. Another erroneous belief about rebirth is that it's for the purpose of attaining perfection—for the learning of lessons. From the soul's perspective, however, that's really secondary for the soul is already perfect on its own level. Its true motivation is sacrifice and service to the lesser lives in its care. Alice Bailey describes rebirth as, in fact, "a magical and magnetic interplay between the form side of life and life itself", an interplay consciously undertaken by the soul.

All evolutionary unfoldment occurs under the Law of Periodicity—of cycles. So to understand the spiritual significance of the twelve signs of the zodiac, one must see them as six pairs of opposites which form a completed whole; in this case, Cancer and its opposite, Capricorn. So “Through the door of Cancer streams the ‘magnetic magical light which guides the soul into the dark place of experience’”. Similarly, the magical pull of Capricornian energy draws the soul steadily away from form life and experience on the path of discipleship. The energy of Capricorn is the “radiant light which leads the soul in safety” away from form life and onto the mountain top of initiation in Capricorn. Through the push and pull of this pair of opposites over repeated incarnations, form life is liberated from crystallisation and becomes a conscious means of service. This is suggested in the keynote for Cancer which we will work with in meditation tonight: “I build a lighted house and therein dwell.”

Cyclic appearance and withdrawal governs not only the evolution of individual human beings but of whole kingdoms in nature, races and societies, and the seven rays themselves. All manifestation follows a cycle of inbreath, interlude, outbreath, another interlude. Just so, we’re told that “Reincarnation or cyclic activity lies behind all phenomenal activity and appearance. It is an aspect of the pulsating life of Deity...It is that which lies behind the science of chemical affinity, the relation of the pairs of opposites, and of the marriage relation”, according to Alice Bailey.

This brings up the group aspect of reincarnation, which is really the most significant factor about rebirth. Such is the self-centred nature of the human psyche that we tend to think of rebirth as “all about me”, but in fact it’s really about “us”—our group and our place within that group. And here the group constitutes those with whom one has a relationship, whether good or bad; beginning with one’s family of birth, followed by the expanding arcs of relationship that include one’s friends (and enemies, if one has them), one’s partners in one’s field of work and interest, one’s nation. Like it or not, we are all affected by our national ideology more than we’d probably like to admit.

And each rebirth is a picking up of an old familiar thread made up of love, ill will, obligations, shared experiences, mutual goals, antipathies, ideals and values, unpaid debts. Our group is made up of a very complicated set of relationships but we can take hope in Alice Bailey’s statement that the Law of Rebirth is the Law of Opportunity—for uniting with old loved ones, for resolving past injustices and correcting old imbalances. H.P. Blavatsky defined the Law of Karma as the attainment of equilibrium and that casts a revealing light on reincarnation—as a readjustment of conditions leading to a more correct balance and equilibrium. Such a perspective gives us hope and a sense of the beauty of life, no matter what the conditions might be. All is leading to the correction of imbalance and the perfection of relationship. All is leading to greater light—the light of wisdom, of love, compassion, forgiveness, and hope.

Essentially, we could say that we have a relationship to everyone who reincarnates with us and shares the same lessons and experiences with us. HPB emphasised the need for studying the “astral family”, for this contains the occult heredity of any person, she said. In the astral is found the clue to the “egoic family”, the soul group. With this clue, Alice Bailey said, the student can identify the characteristics of his group on the soul level, its place among other groups, and eventually his ray or ashramic group. There seems to be a growing interest in the study of genealogy, thanks to the resources of the internet, but the true study of heredity lies not in the physical line of descent—the line of one’s birth ancestry. One’s physical ancestry might be one conditioning aspect, providing one with the genetic make-up that predisposes the physical body to certain characteristics, but one’s true soul group is made up of those with whom one has evolved in consciousness, through service, through shared experiences both joyful and sorrowful.

It’s said that every individual has essentially four groups he belongs to: the national group, with which he shares a vast karma; his family group, essentially for working off karma; the band of servers to which he may be affiliated; and the group to which he belongs on the inner planes. One of the hardest lessons for disciples to master is to recognise their spiritual family, which Alice Bailey said is seldom the same as

one's "earthly family". Yet, at the same time, we're told there is no better training school for a disciple than family life. The relationships it imposes, the demands family life makes for adjustment and adaptability—in other words, for unselfishness—and the opportunities it offers for the full expression of every part of one's nature, are invaluable. And family life does indeed bring into the light whatever is latent within us, whether we want to acknowledge it or not.

"I build a lighted house and therein dwell." Betty Ford died last week, and her life was all about letting the light shine in. Although her obituaries said she suffered from an acute lack of self-worth as a young person, she developed into a remarkably fearless person and a real forerunner of the transparency that's such a demand of the present times. Nowadays everything is shouted from the housetops and so many people seem eager to reveal the most private and personal aspects of their lives, that it might be hard for younger people to appreciate Betty Ford's willingness to be seen for what she was. She spoke about her struggles with alcoholism and addiction when that was rarely admitted, about a dread illness in a part of the body that was seldom mentioned in "polite society" then. Betty Ford wasn't immodest or a publicity seeker, but she was honest, unveiled and unwilling to conceal something if her experience could help others.

"I build a lighted house and therein dwell." Transparency is the demand of the times, yet people still behave as if they won't be found out—even those in public life who believe some unredeemed part of themselves can be kept hidden from view. There's certainly a sensational aspect to some of the more lurid, media-driven exposes, but there's also a spiritual principle working out. As the seventh ray, the energy which governs the fusion of spirit and matter, becomes stronger, it demands the reconciliation of form or appearance with the governing energy of life itself, so that the inner and outer come into alignment, above and below merge into a greater harmony. Any aspect that has lain hidden under a rock, so to speak, has to come into the light of day, the light of mind, for recognition followed by transformation leading to destruction or redemption. It's a profound and in some ways rather terrifying process the world is engaged in now, and it's painful to see people exposed by the media spotlight, but ultimately it will lead to a greater good—greater clarity and truthfulness.

Public opinion can be terribly harsh, and anyone bold enough to enter public life deserves a certain amount of compassion in this day of instantaneous communication, whether of truths, half-truths, or downright lies. Cancer conditions the will of the mass, mass consciousness, mass psychology, which are other terms for public opinion. The media remind us regularly of the dangers of public opinion based on ignorance and prejudice, yet Alice Bailey said that when a trained, enlightened public opinion emerges on a worldwide scale, out of this public opinion will emerge the mass will-to-good, inherent in every individual, and that for this humanity must work and wait.

The role of men and women of goodwill is to produce an atmosphere which will evoke an attitude of goodwill, rather than trying to formulate some cut-and-dried solution to world problems. When an atmosphere of goodwill, of essential decency and fairness predominates in the public discourse, human beings will, of their own accord and inner light, work out the solutions to world problems. "Steadily and persistently", Alice Bailey said, "the general public must be taught an internationalism and a world unity which is based on simple goodwill and on co-operative interdependence." That gives us a clear guideline in choosing what media to listen to and to trust: Does it present its information with goodwill and in a spirit of internationalism, interdependence and unity? Or does what we're told attempt to divide, separate and foster hatred?

The immortality of the human soul and the innate ability of the spiritual, inner being to work out its own salvation under the Law of Rebirth, and in response to the Law of Karma are laws no one can evade. We are all subject to them under the timing set by the soul and by cyclic law, and as the spiritual path is trodden with increasing dedication, the aspirant is held to an increasingly exacting standard. That's why

meditation is such an important practice, for it constantly reorients one's attitude, casting the light of mind upon desires that might otherwise evade our recognition, exposing glammers to the clear-eyed gaze of the soul as the pure light of the mind pours into all the dark places of the lower nature. These are the results of mental polarisation brought about by meditation and detachment from "the things of the world". Recognition can come as a shock, but we can take reassurance in the realisation that "Every form holds hid a Life. Every life constantly reaches out after a similar life in other forms." Within the soul lies hid a nucleus of spiritual energy called the jewel in the lotus. This is the pure energy of the spiritual will, the force of evolution itself and the essence of who we really are. The jewel in the lotus is the point of anchorage for the Monad during incarnation on the physical plane. It contains within itself "all possibilities, all potential, all experiences. It embodies the will-to-be, the quality of love and of active intelligence which will bring the indwelling spark of life into full expression. This point, this jewel, has the power to withdraw to its Source, and it's the cause of the return of the Eternal Pilgrim to the Father's Home after eons of experience", Alice Bailey said.

The disciple begins to react or respond to the jewel in the lotus when sacrifice governs his life, his thoughts and his choices. When knowledge leads to wisdom and love expands from the personal to love for the whole, and when sacrifice—the "power to renounce"—directs the life, the jewel in the lotus opens and radiates. "I build a lighted house and therein dwell." This is the purpose of incarnation and the goal of every sincere seeker. Let us work in meditation to strengthen this profound aspiration in human hearts.