

FESTIVAL OF VIRGO
New York, September 11, 2011

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Good afternoon, friends, and welcome to the Festival of Virgo. This is a special day, for not only is it the day of the full moon, but it's the tenth anniversary of September 11th—a day of global consequences whose effects are still sending ripples throughout the world; a day that revealed something new about the human capacity for hatred, but also for love. For those of us who were here in New York ten years ago, September 11th was not only global in its impact, but local and personal too. And if we were here, we remember not only the pain and fear and confusion of that dreadful day, but we remember the blast of love that poured into this city. For the Buddhist Dhammapada said: "Hatred never ceases by hatred. Hatred ceases only by love. That is the eternal rule."

Love was present in the phone calls many of us received from friends near and far, even some of whom we had lost touch with. Love was present in the elderly French lady who said "I think, today, we are all Americans." Love was present in the ceremony the firefighters in Budapest, Hungary, conducted the next morning, in front of their firehouse, to pay tribute to their fellow firefighters who died in New York City. Love was present in the thousands of "Portraits of Grief" which the New York Times published one by one, in memory of nearly every one of the 3000-some human beings from more than 70 nations and all walks of life who died that day.

Love was almost tangible then, and love pours into the world each month at the time of the full moon, when the channel for the inflow of love and light is opened, giving an opportunity for a group Approach to the Hierarchy. Through this channel, the Light and Love of God can pour into the world with particular power, but this depends on the creation of a receptive channel by the worldwide group of meditators. So let us take a moment on this special day to visualize the Light and Love which are pouring into the world now, bringing peace to human hearts and illuminating human consciousness on a planetary scale, and then let us say the ancient words of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

Lead us, O Lord,
From darkness to Light;
From the unreal to the Real;
From death to Immortality.

The deep longing to "know the truth", to be led from darkness to light, from the unreal to the real, from death to immortality, is especially poignant today, as we look back upon the past ten years. Perhaps it's easier to distinguish darkness from light than it is the unreal from the Real. The outer tangible world, the world of forms of all grades, expressing a wide range of levels of consciousness, seems so real. It's this world that suffered the terrible blow of the September 11th attacks, and there is nothing served by minimizing the loss suffered that day. But the whole thrust of the spiritual path, which is a path of expanding consciousness, is to find that realm or plane of life where there is no suffering, no loss; a level of existence untouched by whatever occurs on the outer planes of existence—the etheric/physical, emotional and mental planes that most people call, simply, "life".

This was the dilemma the warrior Arjuna faced in the Bhagavad Gita. Confronted by a war between two sides of his family and appalled by the need to pick a side and fight, he stood overwhelmed by the fear of choosing wrongly, and by pity for the pain he witnessed. "I cannot see whether it would be better for me whether we be the victors or the defeated", he said, "for I should not wish to live after having caused the death of those arrayed against us. Nay, nay, I will not fight." But Krishna would have none of it, saying, "You grieve for those who need no grief, yet your words are not those of the foolish, but bear within them the seeds of wisdom...Your utterances have a wise sound, but yet express only the outer wisdom...They

are true, and yet not wholly true—the half-truth is apparent—the missing half is the deeper portion. The truly wise grieve neither for the dead, nor for the living. Just as the brave man fears neither Death nor Life, so does the wise man avoid grief over either...Know thou, O Prince of Pandu, that there never was a time when I, nor thou, nor any of these princes of earth was not, nor shall there ever come a time, hereafter, when any of us shall cease to be.”

Krishna goes on to say, “As the soul, wearing this material body, experiences the stages of infancy, youth, manhood, and old age, so shall it, in due time, pass on to another body, and in other incarnations shall it again live, and move and play its part. These things of matter, that bring us cold, heat, pleasure, pain, come and go again; they last not; therefore endure them, O son of Bharata!”

“For, verily, I say unto you, that the man whom these things have ceased to further torment—he who stands steadfast, undisturbed by pleasure and pain—he to whom all things seem alike—such an one, say I, has acquired the road to Immortality.”

“That which is unreal has no shadow of Real Being, notwithstanding the illusion of appearance and false knowledge. And that which has Real Being never ceased to be—can never cease to be, in spite of all appearances to the contrary.

“Take unto your inner mind this truth, O Prince! Verily, the Real Man—the Spirit of Man—is neither born, nor does it die. Unborn, undying, ancient, perpetual and eternal, it has endured and will endure forever. The body may die; be slain; be destroyed completely; but He that has occupied it remains unharmed...Weapons pierce and cut not the Real Man, nor does the fire burn him...for he is impervious to these things of the world of change; he is eternal, permanent, unchangeable and unalterable; He is Real.”

So says Book Two of the Bhagavad Gita. How, then, should we approach this Festival of Virgo with its keynote, “I am the Mother and the Child. I, God, I, matter am”? The essence of Krishna’s message is summed up by what the Tibetan says embodies the mission of Virgo: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Virgo concerns the whole goal of the evolutionary process, which is to shield, nurture and finally reveal the hidden spiritual reality. This every form veils, conceals, but the human form is uniquely equipped to manifest it in a manner different than any other expression of divinity. The mother aspect—mother and matter being derived from the same root word—is to protect the germ of the Christ life. Matter guards, cherishes, and nurtures the hidden soul—for a time. Thus the material realm is a place of birth, but if the soul doesn’t attain release from it, becomes instead imprisoned by it, matter becomes a realm of death. This is the whole meaning behind the birth of Christ in a cave, deep within the earth, symbolic of spirit entering into matter, and then after his Crucifixion and burial within another cave, making his ascension—his release from death and the earthly realm, symbolized by the rock which had mysteriously rolled away from his now-empty tomb in the cave.

In Virgo, we’re told, the purpose of form life begins to be realized, and desire for personality satisfaction begins to wane. The search for an inner recognition of the soul, the Christ consciousness, takes on a greater control and grows, expands, until the inner spiritual reality is released from the thralldom of matter.

We don’t normally go into the astrological significances of these monthly festivals, which can be a by-path, but just for a moment let’s ponder on an astrological “tidbit” given us in Esoteric Astrology. The planet Jupiter governs esoterically both Virgo and Aquarius. Jupiter is said to be the conveyor of expansion, which demonstrates in Virgo in the nurturing guardianship of the Christ child, the soul, by the mother, the matter aspect. And in Aquarius the divine quality of expansion will bring the Christ consciousness to fruition as group consciousness. When that happens, the soul aspect will be visible on a large scale for the first time in humanity.

In esoteric astrology, it's important to remember that the twelve signs must resolve themselves into six, symbolized by the union of the pairs of opposites—in this case, Virgo and Pisces. At the close of the age of Pisces—in other words now—the lessons of Virgo must be assimilated. The need is to understand the function of matter as HPB summed it up so succinctly: “Matter is the vehicle for the manifestation of soul on this turn of the spiral; and soul is the vehicle on a higher turn of the spiral for the manifestation of spirit, and these three are a trinity synthesised by Life which pervades them all”, she said. That this is the opportunity of the present times at the close of the age of Pisces is seen in the symbolism of Christ's birth in Bethlehem, which means “House of Bread”, for bread is the symbol of material sustenance. Virgo is often depicted as a woman holding a shaft of grain, symbolizing the need to share material abundance, bread, freely for the meeting of needs of all, not the greed of a few. Remembering that the twelve signs must be resolved esoterically into six—in this case Pisces and its polar opposite, Virgo—this is surely the lesson behind the present economic turmoil. And it's approaching a point of crisis, for the disparity between the rich and the poor, the uneven distribution of economic wealth, is increasing. It's reaching a dangerous point, for such inequality goes against the divine Plan; it breaks spiritual law.

Thoughtful people of goodwill and concern for humanity witness this disparity and often respond with alarm at the injustice and greed they see in the world. But the Virgo experience is a cave experience, meaning it takes place in the dark, “in the womb of time” and out of eyesight. In this phase of growth much has to take place on inner levels before achieving outer results. We might not think of time as a great womb—an incubator for the spirit—but on earth that is the function of time, a faculty which doesn't exist outside the earth-bound experience. On the plane of manifestation, spiritual growth requires a phase of gestation and it can't be rushed. The whole trend of the present times is the desire for instantaneous gratification, whether of material desires or the need for intellectual knowledge or the resolution of a crisis. It has to happen now. But that's not the way of Virgo, which has to do with “slow, yet powerful crises”, as the Tibetan puts it. This is far different than dramatic upheavals, but its effects are lasting if the process is handled correctly.

There is a passage in *Esoteric Psychology, Volume II*, which deals with this. It's a discussion of the proper attitude and method of the server as he formulates in meditation his little part in the Plan of God. The young and eager would-be server can obstruct his own agenda with a sense of rush and busy feverishness. “It takes the soul itself to reveal to the poised and peaceful mind the next step to be taken in the work of world evolution”, the Tibetan says. The work of bringing through the ideas for the unfoldment of the Plan must take place in silence, stillness, with humility and a realization that one is only a tiny part in a vast group effort. This point of silence is one of the mysteries of spiritual unfoldment, we're told, and it depends upon the need for the server to “pause upon the astral plane, and there, in a holy and controlled silence, wait, before permitting the force to pour through”. Once the force reaches the centres in the etheric body it takes on their coloring, their vibration, and the result then is unalterable. Thus the need to first purge the infant realization coming to birth of all astral and personality-oriented impurities.

This need may reveal one contribution that the worldwide group of meditators can make at these monthly festivals. By registering clear and lighted thoughtforms that express the quality of the divine energies directed into human consciousness each month by the Hierarchy, we can help to build the structure on the mental plane—the blueprint, so to speak—for the new world now coming to birth.

So much is coming to light at the present time, sometimes we may feel like the mole emerging out of his little cave, blinking, blinded by the harsh light of dawning reality. “Virgo symbolizes the depths, darkness, quiet and warmth. It is the valley of deep experience wherein secrets are discovered and eventually ‘brought to light’. It is the place of slow, gentle and yet powerful crises and periodic developments which take place in the dark and yet which lead to light”, the Tibetan says.

That light is becoming steadily brighter, and if we, humanity, link arms and stand in unity, we will be strong enough to bear the coming revelation. Some closing words of the Tibetan give us the right perspective:

“Let us always remember that to the Custodians of God's Plan and to Those Who are working out the new developments, *the form side of life*, the outer tangible expression, is of entirely secondary importance. Your vision is oft distorted by the pain and suffering to which the form is subjected (either your own or that of others, individually or en masse), so that you do not see clearly the purpose and the urgency of *the life within the form....*” Or, as the Bhagavad Gita put it, “He who has gained freedom from attachment to, or fear of, objects of sense; he who finds his strength and love in the Real Self, he gains Peace. And in that Peace which passes all understanding, he finds release from all the troubles and pains of life. And, his mind, now freed from these disturbing elements, is open to the inflow of Wisdom and Knowledge.”

So, with such a mind, let us work as a group in meditation, using the keynote for Virgo: *I am the Mother and the Child. I, God, I, matter am.*