

A Thirst for Reality

Festival of Aquarius

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Greetings and welcome to this first full moon meditation meeting for the year. It seems rather auspicious to be starting the year with the sun in the sign of Aquarius; a sign that is said to be of *supreme importance to our solar system at this time*. As we move forward through the decades of the twenty-first century, we can expect its importance and its significance to grow. Indeed Aquarius, with its accompanying seventh ray, is probably more responsible than any other sign for the changes taking place right now in the Earth and humanity and in our own individual lives. New wine is flowing into old bottles.

Aquarian energies expose us to the airy vision of wholeness and interdependence, forcing us to deal with the problems that come with the wholeness vision, and forcing us to assume responsibility for the quality of the environments in which we live: the environment of the natural world as well as the environment of thought and of living spirituality.

The image for the sign is of a person standing poised and composed, holding a water pot on the shoulder. Waters flow freely from the pot, bringing healing wherever it is needed, quenching the thirst for a touch of Reality. In many cultures the word for water is the same as the word for life - and this gives us the clue to the meaning of the image. The water of life which is poured forth for all who are thirsty refers not to the watery world of emotions, of the astral body, but to the 'waters of space', the life force of the cosmos.

One of the results of these Aquarian waters now flowing through the life of humanity is the increasing focus on service and on group consciousness in so many spiritual and religious communities. As we move through time, and through the generations, we can imagine that our understanding of the archetype of spiritual groups dispensing healing energies will continue to deepen and mature and will be expressed with a growing authenticity, simplicity and generosity. This is the future that Aquarius offers. We can expect that as a result of generations of focused spiritual work, brain cells around the pineal gland are beginning to awaken. Increasingly, groups will be able to use the third eye, 'the Eye of Shiva', to see the Work they have to do. During the coming decades, it makes sense to think that intuition will flourish in ways that have never happened before, so that the synthesis underlying the diversity of the incarnated world will be revealed, seen for what it is.

For students of the writings in the Alice Bailey books, this new year, 2019, can be seen as an especially important year for esoteric work. The year concludes with a Festival Week from December 21 – 28, which is said to occur every seven years. The suggestion is that during the Week, the energies of Capricorn that normally flow at the end of

December will be augmented by energies from a great and mysterious constellation that is *to our zodiac what the zodiac is to the earth*. DK describes the seven-yearly event as a “week of group impact” when the entire Group of World Servers receives an energetic boost – something like an overshadowing. Another hint about the significance of this year is that there will be two Aries full moons (bringing a double potency of forces of resurrection) so that the tension held during the Three Spiritual Festivals will be spread over 4 months rather than the usual 3, with the Easter Festival being observed much earlier than usual, on March 21.

For now, however, let us enter the field of group mind where we are at one with all who are meditating for world service during this day of preparation for tomorrow’s full moon. And then expand that vision of a fused group mind to include the plane of illumination, the plane of Hierarchy, where we become open to the livingness of that Great Avatar, the Aquarian Christ – *He who Shows the Light and Gives the Water*. Can we hold that alignment for a moment of quiet, before sounding together the Mantram of Group Fusion?

*In the centre of all Love I stand.
From that centre I, the soul, will outward move.
From that centre I, the one who serves, will work.
May the love of the divine Self be shed abroad, in my heart, through my
group, and throughout the world.*

The Greek story of Hercules speaks of a series of tasks, apparently impossible challenges, the hero must complete. In the eleventh task, which has much to tell us about Aquarius, he is called upon to turn his attention away from the quest for light which has generally been his goal. Now he must turn to the dark and look towards the needs of a vast community of people who are trapped in what we can only think of as a nightmare, over which they have no control. Hercules is to travel to the kingdom of Augeas where he is instructed to solve what we might think of as a very modern pollution problem, caused by the all-powerful rulers’ selfishness and lack of concern for the welfare of his subjects. The King owned a large block of stables housing very well-fed and immortal animals. But he was so immersed in his own issues and pleasures that the stables were never properly looked after. For 30 years they were never cleaned out. The dung from the animals accumulated until, by the time the hero arrives, the entire kingdom was in a state of crisis. Air quality was appalling, the stench was everywhere, and a fatal epidemic was spreading throughout the kingdom, with bodies piling up. On top of this famine was threatening. Fields had become so rich from the run-off flowing through the stables that crops were failing. The king was immobilized by his fear that the job of cleaning out the stables had become insurmountable. And without the King’s support or his will to find a solution nothing could be done.

Hercules was commanded to perform a miracle – persuade the King to let him relieve the population from the source of its misery, and then come up with a way to do the work – to clean the stables. There is a suggestion in some tellings of the story that the task was given to Hercules to humiliate him, cut him down to size and reveal to the Gods his human failings. Yet, however we understand this, in obedience to the command, the hero travelled to the Kingdom, and approached Augeus, offering to solve the problem by cleaning the stables and asking for nothing in return. This seemed like a preposterous suggestion to the King who couldn't believe that anyone could complete such a mission. No-one, he concluded, would make such an offer without expecting a huge reward. Either Hercules was some dreamy idealist who lived in a world of fantasy or, as was more likely, and more threatening to the King, this was all part of a devious plan to steal the crown's accumulated wealth. And so, the ever-skeptical Augeus made an offer: "Clean the stables within a single day and I will give you one-tenth of all my animals; but if you fail your life and all your possessions will be in my hands." Focused on the job in hand, Hercules agreed to the terms.

Remember, Hercules is the universal hero, the disciple willingly facing tests and challenges so that he can gain the experience needed to grow in wisdom and pass through the portals of initiation. When the sun is in Aquarius the challenge for Hercules, and for us, is to turn away from the light and face the dark. The mountains of animal dung in the story suggest that we are asked to face the darkness of accumulated human separateness and materialism that we find within ourselves as well as within the shallowness and superficiality of our cultures and nations, focusing attention on the deep-seated thirst for joy, beauty and meaning that this shallowness creates. This thirst for the light can be understood as the invocation of the times – buried, repressed, unspoken and unconscious. The wasteland of the passing Piscean consciousness thirsts for redemption and for the healing flow of the waters of life.

Drawing on the airy nature of Aquarius, Hercules changes the way he looks at the problem. Instead of narrowing his vision in to focus on the stables, he stood above the scene. From this higher perspective he saw the stables as part of a wider environment. And from this simple act of changing perspective – Hercules immediately saw that the stables were between two rivers, and the rivers flowed with cleansing waters. All that he had to do was create a channel for those waters to flow through the stables and save the kingdom. And so, the deed was accomplished in one day.

But there is more to the story. The King, deciding he was tricked, refused to keep his promise and banished Hercules from the kingdom. Yet the hero's task was to bring healing energy to the people and the natural world – and this he did. And in the version of the tale recorded by the Tibetan, Hercules is rewarded by the God's with the jewel of the eleventh labour. The reward is because, in this labour, he had become a "server of the world".

During the Aquarius full moon, we can draw inspiration from this image of the task facing all aspirants and disciples at this time: to exercise the will and the wisdom to see from a higher perspective, and so to become servers of the world, motivated more by the intention to respond to the deep thirst in the people and cultures of our time than to proceed on the path towards the light. And we can also take inspiration from the image of a full moon tide of energies when Waters of Life flow through all the fields of group mind and heart where the new humanity is emerging. We can imagine these airy waters flowing freely, abundantly, without restrictions, blockages or repressions. And as we imagine this pouring forth, it is important to recognize that Waters of Life have magical properties. They cleanse and purify; heal and redeem; they quench the unspoken, hidden thirst for meaning and purpose, for joy and beauty, for a new experience of the majesty and magnificence of the sacred that is to be found within. The great image of these Waters of Life, and of the Christ as the One Who Shows the Light and Gives the Water is an image of a flow of life-sustaining energy outwards to those in need.

Consider the need for spiritual sustenance and depth of meaning that exists in the heart and mind of our consumer driven age; the need to break down walls of cynical materialism; the need to see and experience something of the richness of soul and the tenderness of heart that comes when the mind is able to see both the synthesis of Spirit, Mind and Body AND the beauty of quiet, patient work to build this inner knowing into the details of human relationships and expression.

The Aquarian mind finds it increasingly possible to see the whole in the part; and to see the world as a place of dynamic movement and process rather than a fixed stasis of unchanging and unchangeable relationships that seem always somehow stuck into 'lesser' and 'dualistic' and 'separated'.

We are living in challenging times when there is a tendency to see the good, the beautiful and the true only in large movements that sometimes, understandably, use ideology and language and slogans to suggest that they are something that they are not. The lower side of Aquarius can present a face that says it is of the new whereas the reality is that there is may be little to back up the fine words and the marketing. And so it can happen that nations and cultures become divided up into those who are supposedly 'progressive' and those who are supposedly 'conservative'. One of the dangers in this is that we lose our ability to value the creative tension arising when those who want change 'fast' join with those who want change to come at a more gradual and less disruptive pace. Another danger in the simplistic division between left and right is that we don't push ourselves to look for the presence of the Group of World Servers and of genuine goodwill in 'the other side'. Many servers will be called, and often rightly called, to engage in the political battles that are confronting nations. That is a noble calling and can be a place of genuine vision. Yet there is also a deeper engagement, beyond politics, that is desperately needed.

When Hercules faced the polluted fields and communities of the Kingdom of Augeus he changed his point of observation. From a higher perspective he saw that the polluted stables were in fact bordered by purifying waters. By seeing the relation between the stables and the surrounding environment, Hercules saw that the sources of healing were already present.

And so it is now, with the fixed polarization of opposing ideologies. There is a need to look beyond the ideology of left and right in the quest to recognize those individuals and groups that are genuinely concerned about the shallowness of selfish materialism, and that have seen beyond sound-bites, postures and slogans. Every culture, every community includes people who have the potential to facilitate and nurture muscular networks of goodwill, places of love that can inspire others to find meaning and creativity. Tomorrow is Martin Luther King Day in the US, so it is useful to consider words from his final Christmas Sermon, when he spoke of this muscular, Aquarian expression of Love as: *understanding, creative, redemptive goodwill toward all men.*

Broadly speaking an astrological age is said to last approximately two thousand years. I guess it is true of any time of change, that when the vision of the new is fresh within us, and change is taking place on all sides with a confusing mix of new and old playing themselves out in the public conversation, we can be disappointed that we are not, as a species, or even as a nation, or even as individuals, closer to the vision of future possibilities than we had always believed that we would be. The chaos can provide a good reality check. There is still work to do. Aquarius is just in its earliest stages. Pisces continues to be very much present – we still look to the future as a *New Age* – it has not yet been born, it remains slightly mysterious and our thinking about it is often idealistic, sometimes even sentimental because, even though we may have some understanding of the principles of the Age, we don't yet know what its human shape will be, the hands and feet of the civilization are as yet unformed, we know little about the details or the structures that will unfold (the economics, the politics, the environmental relationships) or even the psychology of this new era. The creative possibilities of human freedom are only beginning to be sensed; yet we should still take heart that the birthing is in process whether we can see it or not; and, most importantly, that this birthing is happening in and through our lives; that we are being stretched to develop a will to love and to serve which is almost, not quite, but almost, more than seems to be possible within the apparent limitations of our DNA. And, most importantly, we need to balance this practical, down-to-earth sense of what remains to be done with the prophecy of Christ's coming, this time as World Teacher and initiator. That is something in the hands of the Forces of light, and Hierarchy. Our role as aspirants, disciples and discipleship groups is to respond to the world need; to sense the thirst in humanity and respond to that thirst. It is our task, as individuals and groups, to bring the water pitcher up onto our shoulders and hold it here with balance and poise; to serve without any sense of self, to spread love in our environment; and as we do this, to creatively lift the unconscious thirst we find around us into a focused, concentrated act of invocation.

As with the Piscean Age, the Aquarian Era will gradually take hold through a cycle of three major movements or, in astrological language, decanates. Each of these movements will be conditioned by three different combinations of influences from constellations and stars of the heavenly realm. Those human beings who have their feet on some level of the discipleship path are said enter the Aquarian Age in the first movement (in other words this current period of several hundred years) under the strong influence of Saturn. Much later in the Age they will pass on to a cycle of several centuries influenced by Mercury and will mark the culmination and final centuries of the Age in Venus. For the large majorities of the population who are still in the process of building up the personality and have not yet been challenged with the trials of the discipleship path the first movement of the Aquarian Age will be primarily conditioned by Venus, then by Mercury, and finally, at the end of the Age, in a cycle influenced by Saturn.

What does all this mean? It has huge significance in how we understand our own time of transformation – past decades that we have lived through and the decades that are immediately to come. For vast numbers of individual's entrance into the Aquarian Age under the influence of Venus means that *instinctual mind or affection* is stimulated and developed – this is *brotherly love in embryo*, but it is not that aspect of mind in which intelligent brotherly love automatically breathes – it is romantic, personal attachment, emotional sensitivity to another, bonding. Many hundreds of years later those on the clockwise wheel will pass under the influence of Mercury when there will be a slow unfolding of the mind – and then in the final centuries of the Age (when the coming Age of Capricorn will begin to unsettle things) Saturn will foster conflicts with the accompanying suffering and, as a result, right at the end of the Age, the vast bulk of the human family will learn to choose rightly, analyse correctly and set their feet upon the path of right values. [Esoteric Astrology, p. 283]

This sounds like a depressing vision of Aquarius – we must wait for thousands of years before right choice even begins to be considered. But before we become thoroughly depressed we need to note that there is another more significant dynamic at play. Those who have passed through the Great Turning and have begun in some way to tread the discipleship path (we are speaking of millions of people) enter this initial phase of the Aquarian Age under the influence of Saturn, not Venus. Saturn, DK writes, *is the planet of discipleship and of opportunity; it is exceedingly active today, presenting to the world disciple those difficult situations and crises which will involve free choice, discriminative pioneering, wise response and correct decision, thus bringing about the destruction of that which hinders without the relinquishing of any true values of which humanity may be aware.* [Esoteric Astrology, p. 148]. Even back in the late 1930's and 40's when DK was giving out these teachings, before the wave of idealism that swept the world after the Second World War, the proportion of aspirants and thinking idealists, those on the reverse wheel, was greater than at any previous time in

human history. This generated a Great Turning of the wheel for humanity as a whole. And what this means is that the human species is now entering Aquarius through Saturn, even though large numbers of individuals are still building up their personality's and developing the muscles of the self-centered will.

And so may we stand as servers, with a water pot on our shoulders, as we settle into the first movement in the transition into a New Era. May we, with gentle quiet focus, play our part I this grand process. And may our group work today, in visualization, creative meditation, invocation and radiation be filled with an abundant flow of the Waters of life, poured forth for thirsty men, women, children, creatures, plants and all manner of beings of the Earth.
