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Water of Life am I, poured forth for thirsty men.

Welcome to the Full Moon meeting in the constellation of Aquarius. And welcome also to all those who are listening in on the internet. This constellation is one of great importance in our solar system at the moment as it is the sign into which our Sun is rapidly moving and its influence is gaining momentum. We are also entering another great round of the Zodiac, for Aquarius governs the greater immediate cycle of 25,000 years. It is therefore a time of utmost importance, for it is the first time that the three major planetary centres—Shamballa, Hierarchy and Humanity—are in direct and unimpeded relation. This relation is also aided by the incoming Seventh Ray which is expressed through Uranus, the exoteric ruler of Aquarius. The Ray of Ceremony and Ritual is said to aid and inaugurate the appearing of a new Age, for it encourages spiritual aspiration, mental freedom, loving understanding and the physical plane rhythm that provides opportunity for the full creative expression needed to bring it into being. The energy from Shamballa (embodying the will-togood) works with facility through the organising influence of the seventh ray, which when fused with the love of the Hierarchy, will 'ground' or make physically visible the results of bringing spirit and matter together. 1

It is from Shamballa that the Light Supernal flows, the Light of Life, which holds hid within itself the purpose and Plan towards which all Being tends. It is the light that brings revelation and it comes from a point of synthesis through the blending of the seven energies into one great energetic Light. A light that exists on the highest levels of divine expression, a revealing light that is, we read, only available when the seventh ray is active and when the Sun is in Aquarius.

It is the closer relation of the Hierarchy to Shamballa, the stimulation of its own interior life, and the readiness of humanity for revelation that will condition the cycle into which we are now entering, a cycle we read, that will be the most amazing in the history of humanity. ²

Let's hold on to that thought for a few moments and then we will say the **Gayatri** together:

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.

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Although, the majority of people are polarised on the lower levels of the astral plane and conscious in the physical body, many are becoming conscious in the vital body and beginning to be conscious on the higher levels of the astral plane, and some few upon the mental plane. There are also 'large numbers of people today' who 'are ready to be fully conscious in the astral body and polarised either on the mental plane entirely or centred in the soul. This makes revelation possible and imminent.³

It is the reality of the astral plane that is in the process of being revealed and it is through ritual that people are becoming consciously aware of their activity on this plane. It is interesting to consider that Aquarius is the sign of the World Server, and as the keynote demonstrates, He carries the Water of Life which He pours forth for thirsty men. Water is the symbol of the emotional-desire nature and the Tibetan tells us that there will evolve a ritual which will eventually reveal the true significance of water and which will open to man a free passage to the astral plane. ⁴

The problems of the astral nature, understanding the psyche of an individual and where their consciousness is largely polarised, is the responsibility of the Psychologists of the world. It was under the influence of the sixth ray that the modern science of Psychology first appeared but it will be through the seventh ray influence that this infant science will be carried to its maturity. It will come to be a 'science of the rituals and rhythms of the body, of the emotional nature and of the mental processes, or of those ceremonials (inherent, innate, or imposed by the self, by circumstances and by the environment) which affect the mechanism through which the soul functions.' ⁵ While belief in the soul became widespread during the sixth ray period, knowledge of the soul will be the result of the incoming ray activity.

The main schools of Psychology focus on the personality, studying scientifically the human mind and its functions, especially those affecting behaviour in a given context. Numerous Schools of Thought have arisen, each with its own particular mode of approach to the human mind and emotions and there is a whole plethora of related disciplines, from counselling and other healing work that finds wide application from education, employment issues to architectural design. Within this diversity however, a unity of intention emerges through the search for greater self-awareness and self-knowledge, a search that has moved into the mainstream through the many self-help books and websites that offer techniques such as, positive thinking and mindfulness.

Mindfulness has experienced an explosion in popularity in recent times, there are very few people nowadays who have not heard of, or experienced, mindfulness in some form or other. And it is perhaps in mindfulness, through its techniques to control stress and bring greater happiness, that a fuller understanding of the astral world is coming about. It brings greater recognition that the causes of unhappiness, depression, stress and much ill health is the constantly fluctuating and often negatively polarised emotional nature fuelled by the desire life of the individual. The divisive nature of the desire life and how it is often the source of negativity and pain is now being recognised.

Mindfulness techniques involve the constant ritual of re-directing the mind away from the concerns of the lower nature. It brings an awareness of the power of standing back from the emotional nature and observing rather than fully engaging with it. Perhaps more importantly, mindfulness brings to light the question as to who exactly the observer is, thus bringing the idea of the existence of a higher consciousness that exists beyond the mind into human consideration. Such revelation occurring on the astral plane will lead to greater understanding of the power of thought and its creative quality and, with the manmade nature of the astral plane being increasingly understood, there will come a definite intention to transform it.

With the steady unfolding of the mind and intellect, the will and Plan of the Planetary Logos, or God, will be increasingly sensed. But it is the disciples of the world, those who are striving to penetrate the detail of the Plan for the immediate period and who are learning to build the ideas and ideals that are necessary for the coming Age, that will lead the way. The Plan's abstract symbolism is penetrated through the striving to identify with the Will of the Logos, and it is ceremony and ritual that brings this about, for it brings the necessary fusion of heart and mind.

The heart has been developed by the mystic of the past, through intense aspiration to know God there came union with the soul. The mystic has now to travel the occult way, training the mind to traverse the mental plane and build a bridge to the higher abstract realm. But in order to access the Plan that lies on buddhic levels there is also a need for a return to the mystic's ability to identify with that which is loved. This time on a higher turn of the spiral. We read that the capacity of the Thinker to enter increasingly into the mind of the Logos, will come from a gradual blending of the paths of the mystic and the occultist. This will bring that wisdom that sees the true essence of things and not just the things themselves, that will allow the intuitive apprehension of truth apart from the reasoning faculty, and the innate perception that can distinguish between the false and the true, between the real and the unreal. ⁶

The mystic seeks to work from the emotional to the intuitional, the occultist works from the physical to the mental. One works along the line of love, the other along the line of will. The mystic fails in the purpose of his being—that of love demonstrated in activity—unless he co-ordinates the whole through the use of intelligent will. Therefore, he has to become the occultist. The occultist similarly fails and becomes only a selfish exponent of power working through intelligence, unless he finds a purpose for that will and knowledge by an animating love which will give to him sufficient motive for all that he attempts. ⁷

The mystical approach will need to be recapitulated in full occult understanding which will bring a synthesis and an inclusiveness with the mind of the Logos, and an identification with His Plan. And to penetrate the love that exists at the heart of the Plan, it is ritual and service that hold the key. For, we read that 'All service is governed by ritual' and that 'no group work is ever possible without some form of ritual.' ⁸ Ritual is therefore going to become increasingly important as we move further into the Age of Aquarius.

There is today often a distaste for ceremony and ritual especially in the more intellectual and mentally focused circles. This has generally been borne out of a disregard for the elaborate ceremonies and rites of religious traditions. We read that

'many good and well-meaning people regard themselves as having outgrown and transcended ritual.' That 'They pride themselves on having attained that so-called "liberation", forgetting that it is only the sense of individuality that permits this attitude, and that the refusal therefore to participate in uniformity of action is no sign of a liberated soul.' ⁹ The aim of all divine service is to direct forces and energies in full cooperation with the Plan, and it is through ritual and ceremony that this will be developed.

Ritual brings one into rhythm with the soul, or group, it is that simultaneous thinking and unity of thought that allows, united action, united ideals and objectives and brings individuals together in one functioning coherent body. A living body in which the Plan can be impressed and understood, bringing to light the part the group has to play in effecting that which is their responsibility to manifest. Rituals are dual, they blend the minds of many into one directed purpose, but they also serve as the agent through which the inner nature of the group can be aroused and stimulated to such an extent as to allow them to identify with planetary Purpose.

So, how do we bring ritual and ceremony more definitely into daily living? Clearly group participation is key and such work as our daily meditations and study, Triangles work, the Cycle of Conferences and Goodwill work all create rhythm and are therefore ritualistic. Some of the most potent ceremonial work in which we can take part is in the joining with others in rituals at the time of the Full and New Moon, or at the great festivals of Easter, Wesak and the Christ's festival in June. It is the aspiration or indeed passion to engage in such work, the devoted commitment to work in unison with others in these rhythmic rituals, that brings the occultist once more into fusion with the mystic and prepares him for the higher work of identification with the Plan.

Of course, this involves sacrifice, for to fully engage with this work we have to leave the comfort of our own homes to take the sometimes tiresome and long journey to the meeting place. But we do this because, as the Tibetan has told us, that when two or three of the new group of world servers are gathered in one place then 'energy will flow'. 10 And, at such spiritually potent times as the Festivals, and with numerous servers in one place, that energy flow, which is so palpable to the participants, has transformative effects that reach deep into the human family. Some of the participants at our full moon meetings here at the Trust, or the seminars and conferences that we hold travel for hours to get here, fighting their way through airports, or dealing with connecting buses or delayed trains to be part of this work. In other parts of the world travel can be extremely difficult as the Trust's recent trip to Nigeria highlighted, where disintegrating roads and extreme weather made journeys almost impossible. But despite the difficulties, the expense and the inconvenience, people turn out month after month to participate and this is because the words of the Christ ring true in their consciousness, 'when two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them'.

We read that the Hierarchy are showing significant interest in these embryonic efforts to engage with ritual, for wherever goodwill is a goal and evokes effort, and therefore sacrifice, in no matter what form, the energy that originates in Shamballa, the will-to-good makes itself felt. ¹¹

Religious ritual is also an important part of the lives of many disciples and it has a major part to play in fusing the heart and mind. The sacraments when properly understood, serve to strengthen the link and realisation of the greater Life in which we live and move and have our being. That of the Baptism (when entered upon with understanding) draws forth often a response from the Great Lord Himself. We read that 'It is almost as if a golden strand were directed from His heart to the heart of the servant—a strand unbreakable and unfathomable and which, with each administration of any of the holy rites in the succession of lives, becomes stronger, broader and brighter. Eventually these many strands will become reabsorbed into their source when the Body of the Christ... is completed in full expression, for each one linked to Him becomes, in a vital sense, a cell in his body' ¹²

It is the fusion of heart and mind that brings about an identification with Christ and God's Plan and as more and more people become mentally focused through the sublimination of their astral nature so the soul will be revealed, and through their aspiration to fuse their will with the soul so they prepare themselves for the next stage of penetrating the abstract symbolism of the Plan. This time is clearly one of great opportunity and the inpouring seventh ray energies are going to bring eventually ceremony and ritual to the forefront of human thinking as it will be recognised as an important tool in harnessing the forces of the planet to the service of the race, as well as the lower kingdoms. Ritual will develop as time goes on, it may include movement, music and colour, and will adapt and change through trial and error, but as our Masonic brothers have always known, it will bring revelation and in time, be the glory of the Aquarian Age.

Let us now work together in the ritual of meditation and so contribute to this coming glory.

1 Destiny of Nations pg. 47

² The Externalisation of the Hierarchy pg. 567

³ Esoteric Psychology I pg. 375

⁴ Esoteric Psychology I pg. 364

⁵ Esoteric Psychology I pg. 366

⁶ Initiation, Human and Solar pg.11

⁷ Letters on Occult Meditation pg. 149

⁸ Esoteric Psychology I pg. 364

⁹ Esoteric Psychology I pg. 363

¹⁰ The Externalisation of the Hierarchy pg. 556

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² The Externalisation of the Hierarchy pg. 514