

**Festival of Scorpio**  
**New York, NY, November 2, 2009**

Sarah McKechnie

Good evening, friends, and welcome to the Festival of Scorpio. The actual moment of the full moon was at 2:15 this afternoon, but we are still working with the powerful inflow of spiritual energies that are released each month at this time.

The festival of Scorpio marks the half-way point in the annual spiritual cycle, which has its high point at Wesak, the festival of Taurus. At that moment, the ageless wisdom says the Buddha returns each year, in His etheric body, to our planet bringing the blessing of Shamballa, the centre where the will of God is known. This blessing is received by the Christ, the Representative of the entire spiritual Hierarchy, on behalf of humanity. In the annual cycle, this moment is called the higher interlude, and it marks an opportunity, which perhaps can be best understood in terms of the cycle of the breath. The higher interlude, both in the annual cycle and in that of the breath, marks a moment of contemplation, when the mechanism is quiescent and a point of “inspired waiting” is achieved. Then, at the lower interlude, the waiting mind becomes the interpreter and instrument of the soul, working out—manifesting—the plans that were formulated in the higher interlude of contemplation.

This is the point we have reached now in the annual cycle: the opportunity to ground or anchor the spiritual energies that poured in at the higher interlude, which this year was marked by an unusually powerful inpouring of spiritual potencies. What we do with those energies, how we manifest them, is the present decision. And by “we” I mean humanity, for the meditation we do each month, in collaboration with groups, large and small, throughout the world, is not for our own inspiration but for humanity. We work in meditation to create a group channel on the mental plane so that the energies of Light and Love, which are directed towards humanity by the spiritual Hierarchy each month at this time, can reach and impress the minds of the intelligent, thinking men and women of goodwill throughout the world.

The creation of a channel depends upon the degree of decentralisation and self-forgetfulness each meditator can achieve personally. This is more than a contact achieved with one’s soul; it’s a unification with the group soul and the soul of humanity itself, which is one. At the higher interlude of Wesak, the goal is to create a union and effect a channel so magnetic that it will “reach the Lives Who brood over humanity and our civilisation, and Who work through the Masters of the Wisdom”. At this lower interlude, perhaps our focus is more appropriately directed towards the “lower branch” of the channel, so to speak—the field of service which is our planet Earth and all the lives upon it. So with these thoughts in mind, let us take a moment to align our consciousness with our fellow meditators throughout the world, and then say together the Mantram of Unification, remembering that the “Souls of Men” include all of us, for “man” is a term derived from the Sanskrit root meaning “to think”—man is literally “one who thinks”.

The Mantram of Unification

The sons of men are one and I am one with them.

I seek to love, not hate;

I seek to serve and not exact due service;

I seek to heal, not hurt.

Let pain bring due reward of light and love.

Let the soul control the outer form,

and life, and all events,

And bring to light the Love

That underlies the happenings of the time.

Let vision come, and insight.

Let the future stand revealed.

Let inner union demonstrate and outer cleavages be gone.

Let love prevail.

Let all men love.

The mantram, with its references to “the love that underlies the happening of the time” and its appeal to “let pain bring due toward of light and love”, touches upon the essential keynote of the disciple’s experience in Scorpio: *Warrior I am and from the battle I emerge triumphant*. A keynote sets the fundamental tone, both literally and metaphorically, and the keynote of each festival forms the core of our group meditation. As we deepen our understanding of the twelve keynotes of the annual cycle, we gain a growing recognition of the nature of the spiritual path—the path of discipleship—and an understanding of the peculiar tests and attributes of each phase of the Way.

Scorpio is one of two successive points of crisis on this path, the other being Libra. Libra marks the crisis of the burning ground, which is entered through free choice and which leads to an opportunity to reverse the wheel of incarnation— not a certainty but an opportunity for one to choose to turn away from the ages-old cycle of incarnations which have focused on development of the personality, on the life of the form, the face one presents to the world, and on all the endless striving to make that face more pleasing, more successful, more visible in the eyes of the world.

If the decision to reverse the cycle of reincarnation is taken in Libra, then the soul faces another point of crisis immediately following in Scorpio. For the decision to leave behind the cravings of the separated self—to “arise, and go to the Father” as the Prodigal Son declared—means a facing up to the past and taking responsibility for oneself and all that one has become over eons of repeated incarnation. One wouldn’t take this decision if the soul’s directive guidance were not present, but this doesn’t mean that one can suddenly shake off the tentacles, so to speak, of the personality, the separated self. The labour of Hercules in Scorpio is an excellent documentation of what it takes to gain freedom from the grip of the hydra, the monster-like creature which is such an apt symbol for the unredeemed personality.

“Scorpio”, Alice Bailey tells us, “carries the test right down into the physical plane life, and then, when it is faced and handled there, the life of the man is carried up into heaven, and the problem which the test involved is solved by the use of the reasoning mind”. To remind us, the tests are nine in all, forming three groups: the tests of appetite, which are essentially physical and include sex, physical comfort, and money; the tests of desire, connected with the emotional life, which are a bit more subtle but perhaps even more deadly to the life of the soul: fear, hatred and ambition; and the tests of the lower critical mind, which are probably the worst of all: pride, separateness and cruelty. We should think about these tests the next time we judge someone for sexual misconduct or what we think of as excessive materialism. The soul might find those weaknesses easier to overcome than a quiet but deep-seated hatred masked by the pleasantries of a well-coordinated personality, or the powerful urge of the separated self to stand alone, apart, and above all others.

These nine tests take a long time in vanquishing, and this may account for the tumbles off the pedestal that even initiates sometimes take, for one is considered initiate when he has mastered control of the four lower subplanes of the physical, astral and mental planes, but that leaves incomplete the necessary control of the three higher subplanes of each vehicle. These yet remain to be dominated, we’re told, and despite all of Hercules’ efforts to chop off one hydra-head after another, the hydra continues to rear its ugly

remaining heads for recognition and subjugation. This thought should fill us with humility regarding ourselves and compassion for everyone else. It also brings to mind the Tibetan's caution against criticism, which might target, focus upon and thereby strengthen a trait that the person who is the brunt of the criticism is doing everything in his power to overcome. It takes time to vanquish the hydra-heads of our lower nature, and this fact deserves the loving silence and patient understanding of onlookers.

From all this, it becomes clear that the keynote of Scorpio—*Warrior I am and from the battle I emerge triumphant*—is more about the battle within than without. For all the struggles and challenges of living in the world, particularly in a transitional age such as the present time, no battle is more arduous, more likely to bring the disciple to his knees, than the internal battle with the forces of the lower self.

This battle isn't even recognised until the aspirant has reached the crisis point of Libra and made the decision to reverse his direction—the basic trajectory of his life—from that for more and more personal fulfillment, to union with the soul, which is union with the Divine, with the one Life that ensouls the world. As long as one pursues the goals of the separated self, there is no internal battle, only struggles with worldly limitations, which one believes will be resolved with more money, more beauty, more acclaim, more more more. Only when it dawns on the consciousness of the individual that the vessel of the separated self cannot be filled up by worldly gains—that it's essentially insatiable—does the seeker turn in a whole new direction. And this recognition isn't a culmination, only the beginning of a brand new journey.

I mentioned earlier that Hercules finally vanquished the nine-headed hydra by lifting it high overhead, exposing it to the light of day, which is the light of the reasoning mind. This isn't the analytical mind, which can be such a clever servant of self-interest, and it's not the subconscious mind which some schools of psychology have sought to awaken as if it were a hidden treasure chest. The memories and pseudo-memories contained in the subconscious belong to the past and have dropped below the threshold of consciousness for good reason—because they no longer cast any light upon the way. Now the disciple-Hercules must call upon the light of the reasoning mind. This is the light that the Buddha commanded when he said “Be a lamp unto your own feet. Look not to anyone outside yourselves for refuge” because he knew first-hand the power of the directing light of the mind. It may not reveal the distant goal but it will clarify the next step ahead, if we allow it.

“Extremes ever meet in the disciple who stands at the centre of the fixed cross in Scorpio”, Alice Bailey said. “The spiritual imagination, which is the factor of greatest service to man, begins to take the place of the ancient glamour by means of which we have fabricated the untrue world in which we appear to live and more and have our being”, she said. That helps us understand the keyword of Scorpio on the ordinary wheel of the personality life: “And the word said, let Maya flourish and let deception rule”. Somehow, out of this invocation of the fog of maya, the aspirant eventually emerges for a moment above the clouds and begins to imagine a better way to live. This glimpse, when the suffering and testing have been enough, gives him the strength to pursue a new course. It comes not with absolute clarity illumining the way, but through a growing sensitivity to the light within.

This is the light that the Buddha enjoined us to trust and follow. It becomes ever more visible with growing sensitivity, and sensitivity is a key attribute of the Scorpio experience. The Tibetan touches upon what he calls “the mysterious purpose” of suffering and pain, for they are essential requirements of the path of initiation, leading, as they do, to greater sensitivity—not in the sense of personal woundedness but of responsiveness to, first, that which is found within oneself; then, to that which emanates from below the threshold of consciousness, “stirring the threads of memory, drawing backward the glances of the Pilgrim on his way; and finally, to a developed sensitivity which emerges from the “furthest centre”. At every stage of the evolutionary Way, increasing sensitivity is the goal, for our solar system itself is said to

be one in which sensitivity to contact is the dominant quality. Alice Bailey said “Love is response to contact and this—in the human being—means understanding, inclusiveness and identification. The evolutionary process is to make a non-sacred planet, our Earth, responsive to cosmic impacts.” We are all, each one of us (or can be if we so choose), part of this tremendous process in which our planet is transforming itself from non-sacred to sacred status, by virtue of the development of sensitivity to contact and responsiveness to the impact of spiritual energies. Each disciple, in his microcosmic way, contributes to this transformation as he develops sensitivity to cause and effect, to the power to think, to use the resources of the mind, the reason. This is man’s birthright as “one who thinks”, and as he connects pain and suffering with their causes—selfishness, separateness, hatred, greed and materialism—he begins to see a way out of his dilemma.

“Let pain bring due reward of Light and Love,” the Mantram of Unification invokes. The pain of battle is global now; it’s felt in every quarter, for it’s heightened by the conflicting energies of the old age, now rapidly passing away, and governed by the lower expression of the sixth ray, the beautiful Ray of Devotion and Idealism but now reduced, mostly, to a calcifying fanaticism seen in reactionary forces everywhere, and the growing dominance of the new age, which will be governed by the seventh Ray of Order and Organisation, of the fusion of spirit and matter. The present time, Alice Bailey said, is a crisis point not just for human beings but for all kingdoms in nature. As she put it, “the world Arjuna is faced with a stupendous battle which will prove decisive in the age-old conflict between material domination and spiritual control”. And she points out that the sixth ray works through the solar plexus, while the seventh works through the sacral centre, which sheds much light on two major focal points of the world conflict: astral and sexual.

How do we, humanity, make our way through the tests of this critical time and emerge from the battle triumphant? By drawing upon the powers of the reasoning mind to make the necessary decisions for a better world to come. The theme of the coming World Goodwill Symposium on November 14<sup>th</sup>, to which you are all invited, will be “Igniting the universal will-to-good in a time of decision”, when we will focus on developing our understanding of the essential decisions confronting humanity at this time. In essence, Alice Bailey said that, “for the aspirant the need is for right choice through right discrimination leading to right action, made possible through the practice of dispassion. In this sentence is summed up the technique of the warrior upon the battlefield of the desire plane.”

Let us work now in meditation with the keynote of the disciple in Scorpio: *Warrior I am and from the battle I emerge triumphant.*