

THE MEANING AND
PURPOSE
of the
RITUAL
of the MYSTIC STAR

By
C. JINARAJADASA

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The origin of the Ritual of the Mystic Star is as follows:

About 1911 a group of leading Theosophists in London, headed by Dr. Annie Besant, Bishop J. I. Wedgwood, and Mrs. Marie R. Hotchener, organized a secret Order called "The Temple of the Rosy Cross." The object of this Order was to work with secret ceremonies to prepare the world for the coming of the Great Teacher, just as the "Order of the Star in the East" was then preparing the world through its public work of lectures and publications. The Order had a beautiful though rather long ritual which took nearly three hours to perform. It had gorgeous robes, chants, ritual actions, passwords and signs. Temples of this Order were established in England, Scotland, Holland and India. I was admitted to the Temple in 1912 in London, and was the chief officer of the Temple at Adyar during one year.

About the year 1915 Dr. Besant ordered the suspension of all the Temples of the Rosy Cross, as she found that in certain occult ways its ritual was defective, and also, that its organization needed to be modified. When suspending the Order, she instructed me to write a new ritual, and she left to my discretion whether the ritual should be for a Secret Order or one to be performed in public where the public could also join. My decision was to create a public ritual as the most important part of the work, not however excluding any ritual of a secret nature to be created later on, if necessary, for only a few select individuals.

In the ritual of the Temple of the Rosy Cross the ceremonial action consisted of offering a candle to each of the Great Teachers of the past, preceded by a description of His work. There was one candle taller than all the others which was dedicated to the Great Teacher who was to come. This candle was not lit as were the other candles, for the idea was that it would be lit by the Great Teacher Himself when He came. Since this ceremony of offering candles was very beautiful, I determined to keep that part of it in the ritual which I was to construct. In the Ritual of the Mystic Star, there is the offering of a candle to each of the Great Teachers, as in the old ritual, though the message of each Teacher is given in more precise words. There is, however, one special difference; it is that the candle dedicated to the Great Teacher who is to come is lit in

the course of the ceremony of the Mystic Star, as a symbol that the Great Teacher is present in mystic ways in the world today, and is working through various channels.

I have, however, added a new idea which did not exist in the old ritual. This is the idea that all professions and activities among men should be considered as an offering to and a worship of the Divine. The new idea is that the Divine manifests Himself not only through religions and through worship in temples and churches, but also through the daily activities of mankind. God can be found not only in church and temple, but also wherever men are at work. As a man through his religion finds a road to God, so can he find another road to God through his daily activities, provided he identifies himself with an idealism which can be found in his work.

The principal idea of the Ritual is in the phrase, "The Mystic Star." This phrase refers to the Divine, and it symbolizes the Highest, just as the words God, Ishvara, Allah, etc., denote the Supreme Reality. The Mystic Star, or the Divine, is not only the All, the life and soul of everything in the Universe, but it is also the innermost soul of man. There is, therefore, always a unity between man in his highest nature and the Mystic Star.

The symbol of the Mystic Star is a five-pointed star. Each point symbolizes an aspect of the Divine. The five principal aspects selected for the purpose of the

ritual are: POWER, WISDOM, JOY, BEAUTY and LOVE. Each of these five aspects is considered as manifesting itself, in the collective life of mankind, as a profession. The five professions chosen are: Ruler, Priest, Merchant, Artist and Teacher. Similarly, each of these professions is considered as having its reflex profession: Judge, Scientist, Servant, Craftsman, and Healer. Ten professions in the world, therefore, are taken as avenues to the Divine. I had to limit myself to ten, because of the five-pointed star; but every profession is such an avenue. If, therefore, a man living in one or other of the professions dedicates himself to his work in a spirit of idealism, he creates thereby a path from his work in life to the Divine.

The altar is circular, and is placed in the middle of a five-pointed star marked on the floor. The congregation, where possible, sit in a circle. At the beginning of the ceremony, the altar is covered with a dark blue cloth, on the lower part of which are stars, large and small. The altar at this stage represents the Universe. At the next stage, an altar cloth, called the altar cloth of the Sun, is placed over the previous altar cloth. This second altar cloth is white, and has a sun embroidered in gold in the middle, and the symbols of the Zodiac are embroidered on the fold which falls from the altar. The Signs are placed to move as do the hands of a clock. Over this, at the proper time, is placed another altar cloth, called the altar cloth of the Fourth Great World

Teacher. This altar cloth has at its center a white star; the star is surrounded by five bands in circles of five colors. These are the colors which, by tradition, are attributed to the Fourth Great World Teacher, who was, in His last manifestation, Gautama Buddha, the Founder of Buddhism. Then at its proper time, another altar cloth of bright "Star blue" is placed over the preceding cloths. This last altar cloth, which also has a white star in the middle, symbolizes the Fifth World Teacher, who is known under several names, such as Shri Krishna in India, the Christ in Palestine, and the Bodhisattva Maitreya among the Buddhists. As the altar cloths are placed one over the other, the fold or fringe of each appears over the fold of the preceding altar cloth. This is to symbolize the continuity of teaching, in spite of the differences of the religions.

At the commencement of the ceremony, an Invocation is made to the invisible entities, inviting them to cooperate in the working of the Ritual. This Invocation is made according to the traditional methods of Hinduism and Buddhism, and it uses the sacred names of the four Devarajahs, or the Regents of the four quarters, as They are called. The elemental hosts, working under these great Beings, are those of Air, Water, Fire and Earth, and the points of the compass allocated to them are respectively, East, South, West and North.

By tradition certain colors are associated with these invisible hosts, and at the four cardinal points four

lights are lit to show the four colors of the elemental hosts.

The altar must be strictly oriented so that the white light representing the East is at the east *by compass*. It is not essential that the chief point of the Star should be in the East. As the Ritual has to be performed in ordinary halls, it is impossible to place the head of the five-pointed star always at the East; nevertheless the four lights dedicated to the elemental hosts must be strictly oriented by compass according to the instructions in the Ritual.

The offering to the elemental hosts, and the call to them to be present are to be made by two children, who can easily learn this simple part of the ceremony. The ten officiants, with the two children, wear a "Star blue" cloak or chasuble. It has on its breast a white five-pointed star, and on its back a gold sun. This blue cloak can be worn over a white gown; but the gown is not essential to the ritual dress. The blue cloak or chasuble can be put over one's ordinary dress. All who accept the Ritual can wear the chasuble as members of the congregation.

One very important part of the Ritual is the role which is given to the congregation. The public is cordially invited, not only to sing the various hymns, but also to join in the responses which are marked for them in the Ritual.

The Ritual is in two parts. The first part commemorates the work of the Fourth World Teacher, and that

of the Fifth Great Teacher up to the establishment of Muhammadanism and Sikhism. The Ritual then halts for a while, so as to give an opportunity to one of the officiants to make a brief address on the ethical and mystical teachings of the Ritual. The second part of the Ritual is dedicated to the Fifth Great Teacher, who is working at the moment through men and their institutions, so as to create a new civilization.

The culminating point of this part of the Ritual is the Invocation to Him. This Invocation is based upon that written by Dr. Annie Besant in 1911. The Invocation composed by her prayed to Him to come to help the world. The Invocation as now in the Ritual regards Him as mystically present in the world today; it therefore appeals to Him to guide men's hearts and minds in order to establish an era of peace in the world. It is at this part of the ceremony that the candle dedicated to Him, which is taller than the other candles, is lit as a symbol of His presence in our midst.

One element in the Ritual follows the ancient Hindu custom of distributing sacred water. A few drops of consecrated water is given into the palm of the right hand of such as care to receive it, in order that it may be drunk as a symbol of consecration to a noble life.

The Ritual closes by distributing to the world at large the forces gathered during the ceremony; and it gives a blessing not only to mankind, but also to the invisible hosts and to all animal creation.

To my mind, as the creator of this Ritual, a very important part of it is the teaching to be given to men concerning their daily lives. As a result of the old traditional ideas as to God, and His worship through the temples and churches of the various religions, men have divided the world into two halves: the religious, where God can be found, and the secular, where men need not associate God with their daily activities and amusements. In the Ritual of the Mystic Star an essential element is the teaching that men can carve a road to the highest spiritual life from where they are and from their own daily work, provided they discover the idealism latent in their work, and how to offer the power of that idealism to fulfil the Divine Plan for the helping of the world.

The work which this Ritual has to do is triple; first, to give a teaching as to the great Faiths of the world. This teaching is very necessary, for there are so many obstacles in the way of the unification of the world to create an era of World Peace, because of the sectarianism which the religions still possess. Through our little circles of the Mystic Star, we can do much to break down these divisions. At each meeting some instruction should be given by one of the brothers in the circle; he should explain the significance of the different religions, so that in the course of the year the congregation get to know what are the teachings which exist in the principal religions.

Second, it is also necessary to make clear, as our particular contribution, that all great teachings descend from one source; this we do by mentioning the Great Teachers who have appeared in the world in the past, and of the need once again of the influence of a Great Teacher to help the world in its present unhappy state.

A third part of our work is to add an element of purification to the world, by bringing the Source of Spirituality nearer to men's hearts and minds, by making clear that a man's profession is one door to his highest spiritual realization; and that as he does his work loyally, faithfully and with idealism, there stands unseen behind him a greater Worker, who can give him both inspiration and benediction.

A fourth element in our work is to create, as we perform the Ritual, an atmosphere of understanding and tenderness towards all that lives, and to bring about a realization of that unity and strength which underlie what the Great Teacher taught in Palestine, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

This Ritual of the Mystic Star has therefore its special contribution to give to the peace and blessing of the world. As we meet to perform it, and as the congregation joins with us, we become one more helpful source for the bringing of that peace to the world, of which it is so badly in need today.

