

Rituals are created to *invoke* beneficent energies from the higher, more subtle planes to enrich our lives when stepped down to the physical. Likewise, incoming energies *evoke* a response from the level to which they descend. Each ritual sets an energy into motion. This invoked movement stirs in the ethers and then begins its descent into the world of matter as we provide thought forms to serve it. Clarity of heart must be maintained for this force to pass undistorted from the mental to the astral plane where it can more effectively and constructively manifest in the world around us.

Intent is the most important feature in the experience of ritual. The energies of ritual enable both the celebrant and those gathered to be influenced by the invoked spiritual forces. The performing of these rites creates a means to use Light, Love and Power to uplift the consciousness of the participants.

All religions and traditions have had their own ceremonies influenced by their times, their societies and their level of understanding. Rituals add a dimensional effect to preparation for change and provide support to assist us through beginnings and endings. It takes more energy to make change than to maintain and thus support is invoked from the forces-that-be to help humanity in its transformative journey.

Many of the rituals that sustained traditional cultures have been eliminated from our lives, (i.e. rites of passage). With the loss of meaningful rituals, our lives have become meaningless, stripped of any purpose beyond personal enjoyment. Our actions are denied cosmic significance. True ritual acts in harmony with the rhythms of the universe, uniting us with the great current of time and transformation leading to the eternal. True ritual gives a universal meaning to all we do and to all with whom we come in contact, including all of nature.

According to Carol Parrish there are seven steps in the process of creating a ritual whose goal is transformation.

- 1) Intent: motivation, why energy is invoked, to what purpose
- 2) Banishing (release): that which would block the achievement of our goal.
- 3) Creating a sacred space: (openness): creating space within ourselves for a new consciousness
- 4) Invoking (call down the power): what do we wish to call into manifestation so that energy flows
- 5) Offering (sacrifice): What we will give in return, change in consciousness, gifts and talents
- 6) Changes happens (New comprehension) affirming and living the new state of being
- 7) Acknowledge (Realize) : we acknowledge that we are changed. (*Tapping the Power of Ritual and The Dictionary of Spiritual Thought and The Power of Ritual* by Carol Parrish)

Ritual is important for the collective life, for the benefit of society as a whole. Collective rituals help to clear the collective mental field of its negative karmas, and help to create harmony in society, preventing war and other social disorders. Unfortunately we no longer have (an opportunity to participate in) spiritually meaningful collective rituals. (Many of them) have been replaced by negative rituals of drama and sensation or political action aimed at defeating an enemy. The state of our world cannot improve unless we counter these influences with positive rituals. Ritual creates the structure that sustains our personal and collective lives. To restore the science of ritual is thus a spiritual and psychological endeavor of the highest order.

Rituals provide a meaningful way to deal with our subtle, or psychic environment, which consists of the various mental and emotional forces which energize our lives. An unclean physical environment breeds disease and the same is true of an unclean psychic environment. Clearing our psychic environment on a daily basis

is an important key to physical and mental health. Spiritual practices including ritual, posture, breath work, mantra and meditation enable us to recreate our reality.

The Sanskrit word *karma*, which usually refers to the effect of our actions through various lives, originally meant ritual. Action (karma) is always a ritual; that is, whatever action we do sets in motion certain forces, not only of a personal but of a collective and cosmic nature. Ultimately all of our action is a ritual and each action sets into motion certain forces which further either enlightenment or ignorance.

In its true sense ritual means right action, and any action done rightly, with wisdom and compassion, is a ritual. For action not to bind us, it must be a ritual not in the personal sense but as a means of connecting with cosmic being and its movement.

Conscious actions reinforce the energy of consciousness, which causes us to grow in awareness. Unconscious actions reinforce habit, inertia and the energy of ignorance, which places us under the dominion of the external world. Once we recognize that action is karma, we approach our actions with an awareness that makes them sacred. Most of us seldom recognize the karmic or ritualistic nature of our actions because these effects which manifest through time, may not bear fruit at all in the present incarnation.

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