

Sagittarius Festival Meeting — London, December 2012

“I see the goal. I reach that goal, and then I see another”

Simon Marlow

Friends, welcome to our meditation meeting in the sign of Sagittarius. The time of the full moon was only about four hours ago this afternoon and this means that we are working when the tide of spiritual energy is still at its maximum. The keynote for our work this evening is “I see the goal. I reach that goal, and then I see another”.

Reading through various of the Tibetan’s writings, it is significant how much importance he attached for us to try and participate as fully as possible in the spiritual and service opportunities that the sequence of the full moons present. He asserted that at these times symbolically speaking a door opens between the Sun and Moon which makes certain events of a spiritual nature possible. The band of golden light, extending between the Sun and the Moon, completely “irradiates the lunar surface” (to use the ancient formula) and makes possible certain revelations. “To students such as you,” he wrote, “the symbolism should be apparent and can be seen as inviting a dual interpretation.”

The first understanding concerns us as individuals and the need to relate the soul and the personality and eventually fuse these two into one loving, serving self. Here it is useful to remind ourselves that the personality fulfils its true purpose when it is properly and willingly controlled and utilised by the soul. It should not be a discarded dead poor thing. It is vital to the work and life of the Soul which has spent many, many lifetimes in creating it as an instrument that it can use to love and to serve the Plan.

The second understanding refers to the larger picture of the equivalent relationship between Hierarchy and humanity and consequently of the subjective world to the objective worlds, of the realm of causes to the realm of effects. This is a relationship which is becoming increasingly strong and vital as more and more of humanity are polarising on the mental plane, and not just thinking there but thinking with the heart. The heart is inevitably group conscious and thinking with the heart leads us to merge our approach as individuals into an approach as a group. And our meditation meetings are definitely intended to help this happen. Maybe in the meditation we find that our consciousness sticks resolutely in the personal self. Yet the barrier of the personal can be breached and consciousness can merge in the larger whole, though without losing the sense of individuality. If our aspiration to experience this is firm enough we can be certain that the door will open to the awareness of the activity of the group mind, the group heart and the group soul. Much further ahead in the future the approach of groups will eventually be superseded by the organised approach of humanity as a whole.

Now, if we are successful in our group approach, certain realisations will become possible. One of these is the discovery that “Hierarchy can, at these times of spiritual opportunity, be approached, verified and known, thus leading to active conscious cooperation with the Plan which the Hierarchy serves.” Throughout his books the Tibetan drops many hints, and this is one of them, that invite us to penetrate into the world of Hierarchy. Hierarchy is not theory. It is the reality of a planetary centre of love whose members have undergone all that the human experience can offer, have triumphed over every difficulty, have made all the necessary sacrifices and have eventually emerged into that transpersonal state of being which is only just imaginable to us who are still on the difficult though joy-filled way there. But their achievement is the guarantee of our eventual achievement too. We will also discover that for every conscious effort we make especially as a group, to reach up to Hierarchy, they are then enabled to make a corresponding effort of approach towards humanity, thus gradually working towards the merging of the Hierarchy and humanity, reflecting on a planetary scale the fusion for the individual of soul and personality. So can we pause now for a moment and then we will sound together the keynote of Sagittarius.

“I see the goal. I reach that goal, and then I see another”

One of the many indicators of human progress is the way in which the symbol of Sagittarius has developed over the millennia of human existence. In Atlantean times we are told that this sign was depicted as a centaur holding a bow and arrow. Here we have the image of man completely identified with his animal nature. If there were any consciously recognised goals for that period they can be

succinctly and accurately expressed in the material keynote of this sign: “Let food be sought.” This is the predator taking from his environment what is needed for physical survival and for the satisfaction of the lower desires. The arrow is the one that wounds and kills. It is the weapon of desire and personal aggrandisement.

Later the symbol changed to the archer on a white horse. Here man is no longer completely identified with his animal nature. Instead he sits astride, controlling and guiding it. The arrow has now become the symbol of direction, of choice and discrimination. It is the arrow that seeks. In our present time the symbol for Sagittarius is simply the arrow with just a fragment of the bow remaining still in evidence. Choice and discrimination has been transformed into aspiration and eventually the willed treading of the path of love. This symbol is the archetype of what man can become and in many cases is becoming – the disciple, someone who can clearly vision a spiritual goal and dedicate his life to achieving it. The arrow is now the energy of the path which leads to the mount of initiation in Capricorn. It is the arrow that liberates.

In the sequential transformation of this symbol we have a picture of the development and progress of humanity – from basic desire and identification with the form, through the development of the sense of discrimination, to the appearance of love and the unfolding of the intuition. This last phrase is particularly significant for us today, for we are told that the arrow of Sagittarius can symbolise the antahkarana, the rainbow bridge that links us to the spiritual triad, and that if the arrow of our will is intense enough to penetrate through to this high level of consciousness, then this arrow will return as the awakened intuition – one of the great gifts and blessings of Sagittarius.

Indeed through its leading members, humanity itself is becoming the arrow speeding towards spiritual unfoldment and evoking the intuition. This idea is beautifully embodied in R. S. Thomas’ poem ‘Target’:

I look up at the sky at night
And see the archer, Sagittarius,
With his bow drawn, and realise that
man is the arrow speeding,

not as some think infinitely
on, but because space is curved,
backwards towards the bowman’s heart
to deal him his unstanched wound.

The unstanched wound of the heart. Now here’s a phrase that’s worth exploring. We can be immediately reminded of Oscar Wilde’s “Ballad of Reading Goal” which contains the following couplet:

How else but through a broken heart
May Lord Christ enter in?

This portrays the experience familiar to many of us that spiritual awakening is often precipitated by acute crisis and suffering in our personal lives. For example, Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote: “It was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good. Gradually, it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes, not through states, not between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through all human hearts. So, bless you, prison, for having been in my life.”

As with all things there are many layers of meaning. Perhaps in a high sense Christ himself is the archer and the returning arrow is the Will of our Logos that opens the heart in order that love unmeasurable should be poured out upon humanity and the world. And do we not sense deeply that it is the flow into human hearts and minds of love, the basic energy of the universe, that will lift humanity as a unit into the place of consciousness where to serve is the natural motive and expression of life?

We are all acutely aware of the many outer problems that humanity and the world face. Much has

been written and spoken and filmed and blogged and broadcast about them. Indeed, as we speak, a new round of UN climate talks in Doha has just started, though when we recognise how powerful corporate lobbying is and how governments the world over are fixed on pursuing the goal of continuous economic growth to deal with the financial doldrums we are in, it remains to be seen whether anything positive will come out of them. Our track record in this area is not very good: all the more reason to support these talks with our thoughts and prayers and willed intent. Perhaps we have here a good example of the fact that if we try to deal with the outer effects without attending to the more important inner dimensions of motive and cause, it is like using a sticking plaster when what is called for is deep healing and the radical transformation of human consciousness.

I think this is where the intuition is crucially important. It is perhaps natural to think of the intuition as an advanced achievement. Yet over the years the necessary intuitions have quietly been percolating into human consciousness changing it and preparing it to recognise a better way forward for us all. Perhaps the most important intuitive understanding to emerge powerfully in modern times is the understanding of the connectedness of all life. This hasn't just suddenly appeared but has gradually grown over the centuries. For example the 17th century poet John Donne put it succinctly in this famous poem:

No man is an island entire of itself; every man
is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; ...

William Wilberforce's efforts to abolish the slave trade over the cusp of the 18th and 19th centuries had a campaign medallion with a picture of a slave in chains over which was the phrase "Am I not a man and a brother?"

The reciprocal interplay and connectedness of human beings is beautifully captured in this 20th century observation by Raymond Fosdick. "An American soldier wounded on a battlefield in the Far East owes his life to the Japanese scientist Kitasato, who isolated the bacillus of tetanus. A Russian soldier saved by a blood transfusion is indebted to Landsteiner, an Austrian. A German is shielded from typhoid fever with the help of a Russian, Metchnikoff. A Dutch marine in the East Indies is protected from malaria because of the experiments of an Italian, Grassi; while a British aviator in North Africa escapes death from surgical infection because a Frenchman, Pasteur, and a German, Koch, elaborated a new technique.

"In peace, as in war, we are beneficiaries of knowledge contributed by every nation in the world. Our children are guarded from diphtheria by what a Japanese and a German did; they are protected from smallpox by the work of an Englishman; they are saved from rabies because of a Frenchman; they are cured of pellagra through the researches of an Austrian. From birth to death they are surrounded by an invisible host – the spirits of men who never thought in terms of flags or boundary lines and who never served a lesser loyalty than the welfare of mankind."

The understanding of the connectedness of all life has been given an enormous validation through all kinds of scientific discoveries. For example the new understanding of electricity in the 19th century led Nathaniel Hawthorne to write in 1851, "Is it a fact – or have I dreamed it – that, by means of electricity, the world of matter has become a great nerve, vibrating thousands of miles in a breathless point of time? Rather, the round globe is a vast head, a brain, instinct with intelligence!" This perception paved the way for Teilhard de Chardin's portrayal of human consciousness as the 'noosphere', and for Peter Russell's idea of humanity constituting the global brain with people as its constituent cells and the various mechanisms of communication as the linking synapses.

We now have the phenomenon of instant global communication. Even if technology were the sole causal reality behind it, it would still be a most remarkable achievement. But to the inner eye the precipitating cause is the emergence of humanity's unity in consciousness. Half a century and more ago nationalism and national boundaries defined much of human consciousness. International communication was by the older postal and telegraphic infrastructure, or by a cumbersome manually operated telephone system, where long distance calls that were prohibitively expensive had to be booked through various international exchanges several days in advance.

Now consciousness is increasingly global and the internet is rapidly becoming universally available to

match this. Conversations, all forms of communication, information, audio and video files, financial transactions – the whole spectrum of modern living – are throbbing round the world as pulses of light through the global fibre optic cable system that now, like a new nervous system, underpins all human relationships. The significance that it is now light that is the transmitter of all this will not escape anyone with a degree of spiritual understanding. At the click of a mouse on Skype we can be talking with colleagues the other side of the world in an instant at no cost other than our monthly connection fee to the internet. The sum total of human knowledge and experience is gradually becoming available to all who wish to access it. All events within the human family – the revolutions, the wars, the natural disasters, the humanitarian efforts to rescue and salvage, the sporting events, the artistic achievements – are posted onto the web as they happen, by-passing government censorship and the biases of the traditional news media.

Then there are the amazing discoveries about DNA. Our bodies contain not just human genetic information but much of the coding for all life forms – other animals, the plant kingdom and so on. Genetically we are 99.5 % the same as all other human beings. We are 98% the same as chimpanzees. The fruit fly (*Drosophila*) shares about 60% of its DNA with us. Sea sponges – one of the oldest multicellular life forms – share nearly 70% of the same genes as human beings.

Truly, life is one, and humanity in large measure is beginning to recognise this fact. The real transformation will occur when we collectively act upon this recognition. So let us together help to bring this day nearer. Let us bring the energy of the soul to bear on the mind and heart of humanity. It is this that will transform attitudes and therefore activity. It is this that is the deep challenge of our time. Of course we all know how much is already being done along these lines. But we also all know how much more is needed. I think Buckminster Fuller got it right when he said that, “God is a verb, not a noun.” We need to ‘be’ and to ‘do’.

So let us now unite being and doing by going into our meditation. Let us imbue our vision and ideas with light, love and the will-to-good and help incarnate the reality of unity into a practical demonstrated reality in the outer world.