

**Mother of Strong Mercy**  
Virgo Full Moon – London – September 2014

*Dominic Dibble*

The sign of Virgo is one which invites us to contemplate one of the central mysteries of existence, the womb. This meeting place of Spirit and Matter is the creative forge of living forms. It is the antechamber of birth and our experience of incarnation. The developmental processes which happen there are as yet poorly understood by science, for they are expressions of organic inspiration, not mechanical assembly.

In Geoffrey Hodson's book *The Miracle of Birth*, Hodson presents his clairvoyant observations of a pregnancy. He thus reveals the way in which the causal vehicle of the incarnating individual actively vitalises and qualifies the growing mental, emotional and etheric bodies of the foetus. He also details the cooperative role which the devas play in this building process. In the eighth month of the pregnancy, he recounts his contact with "the presence of that personification of the feminine principle in divinity, which was recognised among earlier peoples as Isis, Venus and Ishtar, and in more modern times as the Virgin Mary". He notes the extraordinary beauty, compassion and joy radiated by this great Being, and details the splendour of Her aura, mentioning in particular how from time to time, "her rich deep blue pervades the whole, lit up by stars and bright gleams of silvery hue." This reference to blue recalls the blue robe traditionally associated with the Virgin Mary, and the wonderful blue tones of Nicholas Roerich's painting of the Mother of the World. It is also worth noting that deep blue is linked with the second ray, for the sign of Virgo is one of the three constellations which transmits the second ray into the solar system. Hodson further notes that the devas are the servants and messengers of this great manifestation of the Feminine Principle, and that as the time of delivery drew closer, She came so near that "her angel servants resembled her as more and more of her life force and consciousness became manifested in and through them."

Thus, Hodson shows us how the process of incarnation is fundamentally concerned with the unfolding of deep spiritual impulses from higher planes of being and consciousness, a process of impressing matter with the life and qualities of organic wholes of transcendent beauty and power. It is through the womb that this process is ultimately focused and grounded. Viewed from the standpoint of the scientist, what is seen is, in one sense, more prosaic. Even the work of Rupert Sheldrake on morphic fields, which recognises the holistic impression from higher planes of being, cannot capture the full beauty which Hodson reveals. However, even the conventional explanations of embryologists and developmental biologists, in terms of genetic expression and differential chemical gradients, do point to the extraordinary complexity and dynamism of pattern formation which every single biological life form expresses. And they also recognise the fundamental mystery, namely the way in which matter that is previously homogeneous, a tiny ball of identical cells, can transmute into a huge variety of differentiated cells composing a multitude of specialised organs, which all function as one whole being. For this to happen, the protective, nurturing environment of the womb is essential. Pondering on this fact may prove illuminating with regard to the process of building thought-forms. In *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, there is a discussion of the fifteen rules for magic, which, among other things, explores the role which the occultist plays in establishing a protective ring-pass-not around the form he intends to create, and also the part played by heat and moisture, esoterically understood. Also, it is suggestive that the term "brood", which can mean thinking deeply and continuously about a topic, is from the Old English for "foetus" or "hatchling", based on the Proto-Germanic term for "that which is hatched by heat".

Let's pause for a few moments, and then we will say together the Affirmation of Love.

In the centre of all Love I stand.  
From that centre I, the soul, will outward move.  
From that centre I, the one who serves, will work.  
May the love of the divine Self be shed abroad  
In my heart, through my group, and throughout the world.

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The womb is thus the place where the purity and homogeneity of spirit is translated into the organic complexity of differentiated form. And once life emerges from the womb, the next stage of the spiritual journey lies ahead: moving from this condition as a differentiated individual towards the condition of unity and synthesis in consciousness. Perhaps we could say that there will be stages along the path of incarnation where there will be fresh symbolic encounters with the womb. In Alice Bailey's writings on education, there is an emphasis on cycles of 7 years. One could almost say that a fresh birth occurs at the end of these cycles – into etheric-physical integration at 7, emotional awareness at 14, mental capability at 21. We might want to pause to consider what kinds of spiritual impacts from the higher planes might correspond, at each of these stages, to the observations made by Hodson. And the role of the family and educational institutions in acting as the etheric, emotional and mental 'womb' for these transformations is perhaps not given the full importance and weight it should be given. Indeed, it almost seems as if our materialistic society is intent on rushing children through these transitions without real care for how damaging such hurry might be. The analogy with the potential violence involved in the medical and surgical techniques used for inducing birth should give us pause for thought. And we could apply the same analogy to the need for the careful, unhurried creation of an important thought-form.

Continuing the journey in consciousness, we could say that the stages at 7, 14 and 21 years should mark the respective points where etheric forces, emotions and thoughts become differentiated to the point that they become individualised – they are now sufficiently organised and complex to support the emergence of a truly individual personality, who is able to differentiate the self from mass consciousness. The next step forward involves entering a new 'womb', for, once integrated, this individualised personality consciousness can now become part of a wider whole, a group. Because we are still near the beginning of the Aquarian Age, we have not yet evolved the structures to nurture this transition in any systematic way, although there are a few pioneering places where this kind of work is being tried out. Of course, while it is useful to have physical places and organisations which are designed to help the development of group consciousness, precisely because it is a state of consciousness, it can be developed wherever one is, given a suitable 'womb' or protective space in consciousness. Indeed, the Arcane School can be regarded as one such protective space.

Returning to the vision which Hodson presents of the Divine Feminine, one of the key virtues which has always been associated with this Spiritual Principle is that of Mercy. Mercy, compassion, understanding and forgiveness, are all inter-related concepts, and their relationship to Justice and Karma is worth pondering.

A beautiful legend which encapsulates this vision of the merciful Divine Mother is recounted by Nicholas Roerich in *Realm of Light*. He says: "In an impressive and stirring way Christianity has consecrated the following legend to the Mother of God:

The Apostle Peter, sacristan of Paradise, was disturbed. And he said to the Lord God: 'All day long I watch the gates of Paradise; I do not let anyone in, yet in the morning there are newcomers in Paradise.'

And the Lord said: 'Let us make the rounds at night, Peter.'

So they went in the night and they saw the Holy Virgin lowering along the wall Her snow-white scarf, up which souls were climbing.

Peter took this to heart and wanted to interfere, but the Lord whispered: 'Sh ... let be..."'

Another writer who reflects upon the Principle of Mercy is the artist Cecil Collins. His drawings and paintings often contain images of three figures he associates with the mysteries of life, the Woman, the Angel, and the Fool. And in his essay *The Vision of the Fool*, he writes: "In our Age, one of the greatest feast days of the whole year should be April 1<sup>st</sup> – All Fools' Day. A day that should be kept and celebrated religiously and universally... A day given over to the divine fantasy of holy gaiety. A day of the giving away in unending foolish non-rational generosity, of gifts clothed in the marvels of the imagination... A day of mystical jokes concealing deep mercy. A day when all the mercies of the year gather to manifest themselves... Then there would be the poetic absolution of the heavy abstract machine of public morals, by the charity of the Fool... Yes, this would be the one day in the year during which all human beings could dissolve the cruel monotony of the utilitarian principle of work and respectability, that with the plausible teeth of its mechanism, tries to destroy the mysterious wonders of life... A day when all men, the successful, the failures, the Saints, misfits, heroes, weaklings, businessmen, artists, poets, are united in the mystical charity of the Fool... A day when all men share the Fool's joy in the entertainment of strong mercy."

In the New Testament, there is the beautiful parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector visiting the temple, in which the Pharisee, while he may be an upright man in other respects, commits the prideful sin of judgement without mercy, saying, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not like other men... even like this tax collector", while the tax collector humbly asks God for mercy. And of course one of the Beatitudes is "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." It is intriguing to think that even the merciful are in need of mercy and forgiveness.

The essential prerequisite for mercy is understanding; and understanding is achieved through compassion. As Madame de Staël noted, "To understand all is to forgive all". Of course, the ability to understand every aspect of a person's character and previous karma is not one which can be easily achieved, so perhaps a more realistic aspiration for the disciple is, "May I understand more so that I may forgive more." As we read in the Agni Yoga Book, *Brotherhood*, "Mercy is not an easy concept, and only the very far-sighted can scrutinize the effects of it." (sl.86)

So how can we reconcile the ideas of mercy and forgiveness with those of justice and karma? Isn't the very notion of karma that every act must eventually be accounted for? This would seem even more obvious when we give it the name suggested by the Tibetan as more appropriate for the Western mind, the Law of Cause and Effect. Doesn't every cause have an effect, and if so, can the "effect" of acting rightly or wrongly be removed from a person through an act of mercy? We are straying into deep waters here, and perhaps all that can be said is that there is a mysterious process whereby the karma of an individual or group can be taken on by others. Indeed, this is one of the characteristic steps on the path of discipleship, when one reaches a point that one's own karma is largely dealt with, and one can then begin to take on the karma of those around you. We may speculate that the disciple has begun to resonate – consciously or subconsciously – with wider patterns of harmony on higher planes,

and it is these patterns which can accept into themselves the disharmonies of smaller individual acts, and somehow re-configure or transmute them. A related practice of working to resolve disharmony is the Buddhist meditation technique called Tonglen, which is concerned with accepting and transmuting others' suffering.

Here are two reflections from Helena Roerich on the subject of the transmutation of karma which may shed some more light.

*Letters Of Helena Roerich II, 24 September 1935.*

“If, while doing good, we take a certain part of karma upon ourselves, such karma surely does not encumber our spiritual progress. Only the Arhat knows where and when he must not help; as for ourselves, we should stretch forth a helping hand whenever our heart tells us to do so. While doing this, however, we must always remember the law of commensurability and goal-fitness, also, that spiritual help is the highest...”

Above all, we should remember that our karma is created, weighted, or eased mainly by THOUGHTS. Precisely, thought and inner motives weave our aura, which is a magnetic field that either attracts or repels possibilities. Indeed, thought-motive - this decisive factor of our karma - is often overlooked by those who discuss karma. But were it otherwise, it would be impossible to break the magic circle of causes and effects. For all is karma and all is held by karma. However, when we finish one round of karma for a certain cycle, we start a new round on other planes and worlds, and so unto Infinity. When the conclusion of karma is spoken of, it means that karma is ended only for a certain cycle or planet, etc.. Thus, the conclusion of a man's karma on our planet means that his inner nature has purified and transmuted its energies to such an extent that further physical life on Earth can no longer give him anything; precisely, all the elements or energies which formed his being have reached that state of perfection which was the limit for this planet.”

And here are two passages from the Tibetan which underline the beauty and power of forgiveness. The second passage in particular resonates strongly with the observations of Hodson on the incarnation process:

“Forgiveness is essentially the process whereby each gives to each along psychical lines, and it is one of the rudimentary expressions of the quality of self-sacrifice which is, in its turn, an aspect of the will nature of Deity. Being therefore related to the monadic or will life, it is as yet completely misunderstood and misinterpreted. It is in reality the sense of synthesis or of identification and of ‘each for all and all for each.’ This sense is being developed today as never before, but it is still so embryonic that words do not help in explaining it. This faculty of forgiveness is not a form of magnanimous forgetting or overlooking, neither is it a gesture of superiority whereby the slate is wiped clean. It is the very breath of life itself—the giving of all to all and for all.” (*ENA* p.129)

“Manifestation is itself the Great Forgiveness. The stupendous Lives—outside manifested existence—entered into manifestation in order to give Themselves for the lesser lives and forms of existence in order that these lesser lives might be enabled to proceed onward towards a goal which is known to Deity alone, and thus eventually reach high places of spiritual expression.” (*Ext.* pp.165-6)

So let us turn now to our work in meditation, and seek to aid the strong mercy of Virgo in incarnating the civilisation of the New Age. Our seed thought is, “I am the mother and the child. I, God, I, matter am.”