

CANCER FESTIVAL MEETING – LONDON – JULY 2015

‘I Build a Lighted House and Therein Dwell’

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Civilization begins with a rose – Gertrude Stein

Dear friends: to you all here in the Lucis Trust library, a warm welcome to our meditation meeting, and a warm welcome also to all of you who are tuning in with us via the internet. In the meditation this evening our intention is to make use of the energies particularly available in the sign of Cancer. These are now flowing into our planetary life in abundance, helping to break down the crystallised and worn out forms of the old, and more importantly facilitating the incarnation and building of the new. Our keynote for this full moon period is: ‘I build a lighted house and therein dwell’.

Perhaps one of the most striking features of the past 800 years or more is the way that a combination of the spirit of exploration, a natural curiosity and an enquiring mind plus technological development has changed humanity so profoundly. A condition of isolated cultures, and the barriers that go with this, have gradually been dissolving and transformed until we arrive at our modern and much more light-filled consciousness of the One Humanity living in One World. In fact, through the demonstration of responsibility and service, the human race is now increasingly becoming a living expression of the Soul – the One Soul that lives in each and all.

One of the results of this gradual globalisation of consciousness is the absorption of the depths and precious insights of the different spiritual traditions. For in their own way they all bear witness to humanity’s innate striving for the light. We learn of the astonishing cooperation of scholars from the Jewish, Muslim and Christian traditions working together in early mediaeval Spain collecting, translating and distributing the scientific, philosophical and spiritual treatises of ancient Greece and Rome. It was this that contributed so much to make the European renaissance a reality. We read later of the enthusiasm of the missionary priests and theologians who had journeyed to the East and there discovered the riches of the sacred Hindu and Buddhist texts. We see how these discoveries – or rather, revelations – fertilised the imaginations of thinkers, artists and writers in the West, for example the transcendentalist movement in America whose leading lights were Emerson and Thoreau. Then there were the great spiritual pioneers who came to see that the apparent differences and contradictions between the various world spiritual traditions are only skin deep; beneath the surface these different traditions are actually complementary and mutually supportive. Their initiatives did, and still do, so much to promote an inclusive view of the religious aspiration within humanity and a deepening of what we mean by the word “spiritual”.

A wonderful analogy of this cultural cross-fertilisation process is depicted in the history of the rose – that beautiful flower which is so widely used in the West as a symbol of love and the spiritual. It fulfils a similar symbolic function to the Lotus in the eastern spiritual traditions. It is the rose that depicts the open heart centre with its beauty, fragrance and radiance and with the birthing Christ-child at its centre. As the old Christmas carol puts it: “There is no rose of such virtue as is the rose that bare Jesu”.

At the west end of most of the great cathedrals of Europe there is a huge window filled with stained glass of the most wonderful blues and reds. It is called a rose window, and many of them have twelve leaves or petals radiating out from a central circle. This actually portrays the energy configuration of the open heart centre. In some cases – Chartres Cathedral in northern France particularly comes to mind – the symbolism is even more explicit. Here each of the twelve petals is dedicated to one of the twelve apostles. And in the centre panel – the jewel in the lotus – is portrayed the Christ. This serves to remind us that during that extraordinary historical episode in Palestine 2,000 years ago the Christ with his twelve disciples established a powerful heart centre within the human race whose influence is still a major conditioning factor that spurs the human capacity to love, to serve and to make progress.

Beautiful and uplifting as they are, I believe there is a deeper reason for their presence. For in a direct and practical way, these wonderful windows filter sunlight down onto the backs of the east facing worshippers. Is it fanciful to imagine that the architects of these great temples to divinity were consciously aware that this would stimulate the heart centres of the assembled people, that this could help lift them out of the humdrum of daily drudgery and form life and would generate the possibility of those wonderful moments of epiphany when consciousness leaps up to the soul and touches the divine? I am sure that this must have been so.

The rose is actually native to both eastern and western hemispheres and has always been valued for its beauty. More than that indeed, for roses were in such high demand during the seventeenth century that royalty considered them as legal tender, and they were often used as barter and for payments. In the late eighteenth century an important thing happened. Enterprising explorers and traders introduced Chinese cultivated roses to western horticulturists. Now, a characteristic of the far eastern rose is that it is perpetual flowering, but that it generally lacks fragrance. By contrast in the West the native rose tends to be highly perfumed but only flowers for a week or two in the year. This is perhaps symbolic of the two cultures. The East is the treasure house of human wisdom and spiritual achievement, yet the countries that make up the East appear, as cultures, to have been in a spiritually static condition. Deep spirituality is perpetually present but it is not really expressed in an outward way. So, to make a sweeping generalisation, these cultures in the past have tended to lack the fragrance of expression – of innovation, of discovery and of progress.

By contrast in the West, again as a sweeping generalisation, spirituality has often been suppressed by material preoccupation, and lies hidden deep beneath the surface. But it does make occasional and spectacular breakthroughs. We can think of the Renaissance that we've already mentioned, and the astonishingly beautiful flowering of a vibrant mysticism in the Middle Ages. Meister Eckhart, Hildegard of Bingen, the anonymous author of the Cloud of Unknowing and many others produced writings that are still a major source of inspiration to people who tread the path in our contemporary world.

Then there's the period which we call the Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason, where the flowering of the rational mind questioned the literalism of so-called faith-based truth. It set humanity on a path of enquiry founded on doubt, and generated development through experiment and testable truth. This paved the way for the revelations of modern science and technological mastery. Then there were the notable initiatives to promote social justice that emerged all over Europe in the 19th century – the movements to abolish slavery and child labour, to establish penal reform, the socialist and communist movements and so on. These are all moments of blossoming when the human heart emanates the fragrance of the soul.

We usually think of the heart and the soul in terms of devotion and love. So it is worth noting that one of the names of The Fifth Ray, the ray of the intellect and the concrete mind, is the “Rose of God”. Of course we should not find this so surprising, for everything is subject to a duality of expression – in this case the duality of love-wisdom. To begin with, it is true that the intellect is “the slayer of the real”, but it eventually flowers to its maximum when it fulfils its evolutionary goal as the interpreter of the intuition. This produces what we might call the rose of the intuition, of wisdom; the rose fragrant with truth. And as far as our work here this evening is concerned, we need to hold in mind that the sign of Cancer is pre-eminently the sign of the unfolding intuition.

So can we now pause for a few moments and then we will sound together the mantram that you have with you.

I know O Lord of Life and Love about the need.

Touch my heart anew with love

That I too may love and give.

When specimens of the far eastern roses were brought to the West, imaginative plant enthusiasts started work on breeding new varieties. One of the keenest rose growers of the time was the Empress Josephine, wife of Napoleon. In order to encourage his wife’s hobby, Napoleon ordered all his captains to search for new roses in the lands they visited and bring them home for her. It is interesting to read that, despite the fact that there was an ongoing war with France, Britain not only allowed the roses destined for Josephine to cross the borders, but also granted free travel permission to her head gardener in order for him to fulfil his horticultural duties – all this in recognition of her intense passion for roses. What a gentlemanly and courteous way to conduct a war!

Among the many experiments of course were attempts at cross-breeding eastern and western varieties of rose in the hope that they could produce a plant that was not only perpetual flowering but was also beautifully scented. This is a hope that has long been realised. Even a brief perusal of a rose catalogue will show what an abundance of varieties are currently available and many of them are indeed perpetual flowering and scented.

So perhaps in this simple and homely story we have an allegory of what is happening within humanity – a gradual melding of the different races and cultures, of East and West, into the centre of planetary creativity which it is humanity’s destiny to achieve; a perpetual and fragrant flowering of the soul – of the light of Truth.

Where and when it is brought to bear, light first reveals the darkness and ugliness of the many different aspects of the human psyche. This is a familiar experience for all of us who have determined to tread the Path. And one of the early tests of the Path is not to be overwhelmed by the awfulness of the previously hidden darknesses within our psyches, but to redeem them. So the human race is now having to face and deal with the endemic selfishness of the human personality, the still prevalent predilection for a gross materialism, the tendency among some to indulge in those unspeakable acts of sadism that have been so prominently reported in the news recently. These all keep open the pathway to the “door where evil dwells” and imperil the future not only for humanity, but also for all life on our planet.

But this is only one side of the coin. The other side shows us the transformative power of light that steps up human vibration, transforms human consciousness, brings the soul to the surface, shines as a vibrant altruism and quite simply produces miracles. Like Hercules we eventually learn that we have to lift the unacceptable into the light, whose purifying energies destroy the corruption of ignorance and desire and release the inner life into a more radiant expression.

This indicates to us another way of looking at what is happening within humanity. For we have been told that humanity is now the world disciple. Perhaps we should more accurately say, the world probationary disciple. On a world scale what is happening to humanity is an enlargement of what happens to every probationer when he is faced with the horrors of the unredeemed personality. We are forced to ditch the alibi of the ostrich position and the psychological sleight of denial. We are compelled to realise that suppression won't work except as a temporary expedient, and even then it's very risky. We have to acknowledge that 'business as usual' or 'life as usual' is simply no longer an option. We come to see that all is not well with the rose of the human heart. Was the poet William Blake being prophetic of this, our time, when he wrote?:

O Rose thou art sick.
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

We have to acknowledge that this depicts an aspect of the truth about humanity. The wars and slaughters and selfish tyrannies of the past hundred years reveal a terrible corruption of the human soul. The lack of sexual control – or more correctly – a lack of desire to control desire and an inability to focus creative energy in the throat centre and hold it steadily there is a major world-wide problem. We observe the very sad reality of leading figures of many institutions who have succumbed to this poison, ruining their own lives and the lives of many others in the process, and negating to a considerable extent the capacity of their organisations to serve effectively. In fact the illicit sex industry ranks with the illegal trade in drugs and arms as a major scourge of modern humanity. These three constitute the main income streams for the international criminal networks whose annual turnover is estimated to be almost a trillion dollars.

Then there is the mainstream continued and ruthless grabbing of excessive riches with no concern about the effect on the world's disadvantaged. And the attempt to perpetuate the illusion of racial and cultural superiority and separateness still warps and disfigures societies around the world. Yet the sacrificial lives of countless numbers of people – all radiant and practical extensions of the new group of world servers and empowered by the outreaching compassion of Hierarchy – has meant that humanity is being enabled to gradually triumph over these and the other darkens of the human psyche. For thankfully they are now openly revealed to us all. And when this is the case, then constructive thought and right action inevitably follow.

For example, when we read about the shocking lapses of institutional Christianity over the centuries it becomes perhaps surprising that it has survived at all. Yet the foundational truths and simplicities must have been constantly beating behind the scenes, for now the rose of love is flourishing within it. Indeed one gets the sense that something very special is happening not just

within Christianity but in the whole world of religion. The more we learn about it, the more it becomes clear that a wind of change – or more accurately, a hurricane of change – is blowing, for example through the Vatican corridors. And at the head is a new Pope whose humility and openness and commitment to serve is wonderful to behold. His recent encyclical on the global environment and the perils of climate change is a case in point. This is not just an encyclical to Catholics in the world, or even to the larger Christian community, it is addressed to the whole of humanity. And people are listening. It reminds one of the Tibetan's statement about the truly great human beings; those who have learnt ashramic silence. "They use not words and yet their sound goes forth and when they speak—and speak they do—men listen." The Dalai Lama's very supportive comments on the Pope's encyclical a few days later at the Glastonbury festival remind us now how closely the different world religions are cooperating. A new strength and livingness is emerging from within the ruins of a once crystallised form. The phoenix is rising from the ashes and the love that underlies the happenings of the time is steadily becoming more visible in the world.

This is self-evidently true. Yet there is a further way to look at it and over a longer stretch of time too. I would like to suggest that over the past two and a half thousand years we can see humanity begin to emerge from the womb of the form life and start falteringly to tread the path of discipleship. The life of the Buddha in India, the life of Christ in Palestine are two of the most important of many such moments in the life of humanity that parallel the experience of the individual who is suddenly touched by the reality of the soul. This is an event that one never forgets. It colours everything afterwards, redirecting one's path through life into new patterns and dimensions of consciousness.

In the same way humanity has never forgotten the impact of these planetary moments or the beauty of those lives that embodied them. True, after their withdrawal behind the veil, we have apparently been left alone to our own devices. We have had the task of applying the teachings, and developing them into a coherent body of thought to direct communities, nations, and now the whole of humanity into a way of life that reflects the values of the soul. As we well know, there have been many lapses from this path of righteousness on the way. But in retrospect we can see that, terrible as they may have been, these have always been overcome through the work of committed individuals and groups, and the wearying feet of humanity made to tread a better course.

Despite outer seeming – or perhaps indeed because of it – we are together treading the path of probationary discipleship and constructing a lighted house for all life on our planet. The Rose of the East and the rose of the West have become one. The rose of the heart has unfolded and the way has been opened to us all to collectively tread the path to the fragrance of the soul. This portends a united and world-wide flowering of the human heart and soul. And this flowering of humanity is in itself Christ re-emerging on earth.