

## Sagittarius Full Moon Meeting – November 2015 “Challenge, Vision, Commitment”

Simon Marlow

Friends, welcome to our meditation meeting. Our opportunity this evening is to work with the energies of Sagittarius. Let us begin by emphasising that what we are engaged in is a planetary service and involves co-workers who can be found everywhere in the world, and who are all tuning in to the reality of this group work, and indeed some who are even physically tuning in to us this evening via the internet – so an especial welcome to you. But more than that, we must include in our consciousness that great group of graded co-workers on the inner planes who are not limited by the constraints of a physical vehicle and whose efforts can be focussed therefore with greater ease and intensity in the emotional, mental and spiritual realms than most of us here who are limited by having to work through a physical brain. Actually this limitation is a beautiful challenge, for we have to learn how to make it possible to anchor the highest spiritual truths and perceptions in the physical waking consciousness. This is partly what the path is about, for the ‘Great Work’, as it is called, requires the grounding of inner spiritual reality on to the densest plane, the physical. Indeed, all who have blazed the spiritual path before us have demonstrated this for us in practical lives that have been lived for others with love and sacrificial will. They have shown us that it is beautifully possible, and we are beginning to recognise that it is not only possible of attainment but actually essential for the rapid progress which humanity is now required to make.

The keynote of Sagittarius which we will use in the meditation later on focuses on the vision and goals to which we aspire: “I see the goal. I reach that goal and then I see another”. Our understanding of what these goals are depends of course upon our point of view. For the disciple, perhaps they are to do with identification with the soul and with group service, or with building the antahkarana that will enable us to penetrate into the mysteries of the spiritual triad, or for sensing the purpose and meaning behind the concepts of the Plan. For humanity, the goals are much more immediate. They are motivated by an acute realisation of the imperfections of the present. Maybe we could say that the failures of the present drive humanity’s vision of the future. Thus World War One gave rise to the first attempt at international co-operation and governance, the League of Nations. This did much ground-breaking work and anchored a new idealism in the mind of humanity, even though it could not offset the conditions that gave rise to the Second World War. This, as we all know, ended in the establishment of the United Nations. Despite its faults, the UN still holds out solid hope for humanity, if and when the nations of the world allow it to do its job. Not infrequently can self-interest lead a nation to oppose UN initiatives that are clearly for the benefit and interest of humanity as a whole and for the planet too, thereby obstructing for a time the implementation of the Plan, and lengthening the period of stress and suffering that all life forms must undergo.

The trouble is that nations are still in the habit of expressing a personality focus, a “what’s in it for me” attitude. This can be clearly seen at the moment in Britain, where it is now being debated as to whether we should remain in the European Union or leave it. It is interesting that both sides of the debate use arguments that focus on the supposed benefits to us as a nation of leaving or staying in. We never hear arguments based on what we can give, or how best we can contribute and serve. This is real national self-centredness. The same trait has been reflected in the old overseas aid patterns of being a “strings attached” exercise – a visible act of service which earns self-congratulation, and which is spoilt by the requirement for under the table kick-backs in terms of trade and the purchase of products that range from

military ordinance to education and health-care – Aid for Trade as it was called. Having said that, it is important to acknowledge the increasing evidence of nations rising to the level of the soul and allowing world need to supplant self-interest. We can also think of the many countries which aspire to the challenge of a foreign aid budget set at 0.7% of GNP. A handful of countries do consistently meet this target and even exceed it. But out of how many, so far how few!

This leads us to reflect on the irony that nearly everywhere in the world we are encouraged as nations to behave in ways that if we adopted them in our personal lives would subject us to much criticism, obloquy and even criminal proceedings. Deceit, self-aggrandisement, cornering resources for our own gain, never mind the needs of others, appears still to be a characteristic trait of the modern nation. We know it should be honesty, transparency and the equitable sharing of human and natural capital according to world need, as the Tibetan advises. It is the NGO and service communities that have understood the urgency and justice of this not to mention the moral imperative for it, but their voices are usually not loud enough to influence government policy significantly. Of course there are notable exceptions to this. Many examples can spring to mind; for instance the campaign in 2011 by the internet NGO Avaaz, that led to the Brazilian government reversing its proposal to continue the destruction of the Amazon rain forest.

So let us pause for a moment and then we will say together the keynote of the disciple in Sagittarius.

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

It is almost a cliché now to say that we are living through difficult times – times when, in the words of Christopher Fry’s poem:

“ . . . wrong  
Comes up to face us everywhere,  
Never to leave us till we take  
The longest stride of Soul men ever took . . . ”

With our minds still reeling from the recent events in Tunis, Sharm el Sheikh, Nigeria, Paris, Mali, Brussels and elsewhere, the wrong looms particularly large at the moment. Religious and political fanaticism and desperate cruelty is critically absorbing our attention, and rightly so.

But in focusing on this we must not allow ourselves to fall into two significant traps of the path. Firstly we must never forget to always hold in the forefront of our minds the enormous amount of goodness that is not just present within humanity everywhere in the world, but is growing, and presenting unmistakable evidence of the soul expressing itself in outer manifestation. If anybody doubts this, just think of the millions of so-called ordinary people who, with no thought of personal safety, step up to the mark when tragedy strikes and do extraordinary things. This phenomenon of the soul coming to the surface and being seen for what it truly is, is wonderfully expressed in R S Thomas’ poem *Match My Moments*:

“That time  
the soldier broke in  
to my room and I,  
the sword at my throat,  
looked up from my sums  
and theorems and smiling  
said: Spare my designs.

That time  
in the rusting bracken  
the road ran with sheep,  
a woollen river but vocal,  
saying in its raw baritone  
to the man on its banks:  
We give our life for the shepherd.

That time  
the queue winding towards  
the gas chambers, and the nun,  
who had already died to this world,  
to the girl in tears: Don't cry. Look,  
I will take your place.

That time  
after the night's frost the tree  
weeping, the miser in me  
complaining: Why all this washing  
the earth's feet in gold? And I,  
my finger at my lips: Because  
it is what we are made of."

What a beautiful allusion in the last stanza to the true nature of humanity as of inestimable value to our planetary life, and that each of us, precious beyond words, is destined to take part in the divine task of making our planet a sacred one.

Secondly, we must not let ourselves succumb to the fear of failure – one of the major glammers of the disciple. We know that what is now happening can seem like failure, that goodwill within and for the world should have created conditions in which what we are now witnessing could not have happened. We know that the past seven decades have been dedicated to the rebuilding the shrine of man's living – the keynote of our World Goodwill seminar a fortnight ago. And while much, very much has been achieved, it is still glaringly obvious that much still needs to be done and urgently done, as we collectively face the abyss of a growing intolerance, hatred and cruelty. Of course it is true that all have failed and will continue to fail. Yet mistakes and failure are our best teachers, and when we rise again with renewed commitment and press forward and succeed, then failure gives way to victory, and humanity takes another step forward in its spiritual unfoldment.

So with these thoughts, let us see if we can identify some of the things that we should do as a real service to respond spiritually and creatively to the present difficult situation.

Firstly we need to try and understand what is happening. We can approach this from two viewpoints. There is the outer viewpoint of linear causality that sees a historical sequence of cultural conditions, geo-political interests, financial and military decisions that have led to injustice and oppression which in turn makes a fertile ground for producing a fanatical response. Much of the comment on the Internet and in the media has focussed on this and it is unnecessary to go into it in depth now.

But understanding what is happening from the esoteric point of view is of vital importance, for it puts us in a position where not only our thoughts and meditations, but also our practical actions can be of real help in assisting humanity out of the impasse of fanatical confrontation that carries so much danger for us all.

It has become almost a cliché to say that a major feature of our time is that we are in the midst of a transition from an age governed by the sixth ray of devotion into a new era. Any transition like this is fraught with difficulties as the new and the unfamiliar gradually supersedes the old and the loved. This applies in particular to that aspect of the world religions that is characterised by idealistic devotion. As the sixth ray withdraws, so devoteism crystallises into a rigid and ungenerous system of dogmatic exclusivity, while that aspect of the religious life of humanity which is more expressive of the second ray of love-wisdom – the basic ray of our system – broadens out into a more thoughtful and inclusive, poised expression that helps create a path for us all into the future. To the former, the adherents of any particular religion consider it to be the embodiment of absolute truth and that their scriptures are the literal word of God. To the latter, dogmatic religion metamorphoses into a spiritual journey into the ‘unknown region’ of the truth that is beyond words, and a demonstration of growing inclusiveness and service.

All the religions in the world have exhibited both characteristics. Buddhism – that most peaceful and thoughtful of religions – is no exception. For example the recent dreadful civil war in Sri Lanka featured a deeply regrettable form of Buddhist nationalism that led to the slaughter of thousands of Tamils. And even today, a significant number of Buddhist monks in Burma are ratcheting up the campaign against the Muslim Rohingya people. But at the same time the Dalai Lama, as well as many other adherents are shining examples of the noble middle path of the Buddha and are true world servers.

Christianity has also been distorted by myopia and fanaticism – we can think of the crusades, the inquisition, and the opposition to science. Yet Christianity at its best has shone the light of love into the darkest reaches of the human psyche. In the dissenting churches it blazed the way that led to the abolition of slavery, and of child labour, to the reform of the justice system and the amelioration of prison conditions. In South Africa in the person of Desmond Tutu it offset the desire for revenge with the process of forgiveness that emanated from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The charisma and drive of the present Pope is gradually transforming a dogmatically exclusive Catholicism into a vehicle for a remarkable healing love.

Islam also exhibits these two features. It is worth always reminding ourselves that at a time when Europe was sunk in the barbarism of the Middle Ages with its incessant wars and religious intolerances, it was Islam that stood as a beacon of light and tolerance, of learning and enquiry, of the value of philosophy and science. It was the Islamic world that preserved the Classical texts for example of literature, philosophy and mathematics which later recirculated through Europe and led to the flowering of the human spirit which we call the Renaissance. It was the Islamic world that gave refuge to the victims of religious oppression.

Yet now, the minority fanatical aspect of Islam is recognised to be a particular global danger with its espousal of a violence and cruelty that embody the worst of what humanity is capable. How did it arise? Here we need to look at Wahhabism which began in the eighteenth century in what is now Saudi Arabia. It was a revivalist movement centred on the principle of the uniqueness and unity of God. Like all earnest and misguided sectarian movements, it developed very strict rules of conduct for its followers, even forbidding them to take non-Muslims as friends.

Lest it be thought that this is unique to Wahabism, we could perhaps also look at the Exclusive Brethren which exhibits very similar characteristics. It is an extreme Christian sect that arose in Ireland in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It places pre-eminence on the unity of God, maintains a strict code of discipline and espouses a doctrine of uncompromising separation which naturally discourages socializing with people outside the movement.

Both these extremist and separative movements occurred as the sixth ray was continuing a process of withdrawal that had begun in the early seventeenth century. It is sobering to observe how the crystallising of this energy manifested in such an extreme way. This crystallisation has reached such a condition now that the resistance to its necessary work of breaking down the old forms is so powerful that unnecessary destruction and violence is being unleashed.

Some have suggested that this represents the last dying convulsions of the old and as such we can best serve by not giving it attention. Instead we should spend our time energising the thoughtforms of the new civilisation that we all look forward to and manifesting them in our lives in practical ways. Others think that the forces of destruction and separation have to be confronted before they do considerably more damage. In this respect it is interesting to look at what is happening in Europe right now, specifically concerning the Schengen agreement. This treaty of passport-free travel is one of the real practical beauties of the European experiment. It is the first time, I think, when there has been a successful international attempt to realise the Tibetan's vision outlined in the chapter on World Unity in *Problems of Humanity*:

There must be freedom to travel everywhere in any direction and in any country; by means of this free intercourse, members of the human family may get to know each other and to appreciate each other; passports and visas should be discontinued because they are symbols of the great heresy of separateness.

As we all know the current terrorist threat is meaning that the Schengen agreement could well be suspended, thus turning Europe back to a collection of nation states rather than forward to a new demonstration of practical unity within diversity.

There is actually a simple rule of thumb for exercising a discriminating understanding about outer events. Where something creates division and increases the sense of separateness, there we have a problem that needs to be resolved. Where something generates cooperation and celebrates the oneness of life, here we have an initiative to support that is anchoring the Plan on earth. And yet this too presents us with a paradox. For the threat of terror is actually forcing the world into a state of unity, albeit perhaps a reluctant one. Maybe this is one of the hopeful things about it, though we could all wish that unity was being generated out of love, rather than fear.

For the Islamic community, one of the more important ideas for world servers to vitalise is that jihad, or holy war, in reality is the internal battle between the soul and the personality that all disciples have to wage and win. Every religious tradition bears witness to it. We can think of Jacob wrestling with the angel in the Old Testament. Then there is that wonderful account of indecision, teaching and eventual commitment to the fight in the Bhagavad Gita. When this process is mistakenly externalised it unleashes the horror of all religious war. The crusades, and the violence in our contemporary world are only two rather obvious examples.

There is actually a very apposite passage from Esoteric Astrology, which delineates how disciples should respond to challenging outer circumstances:

“[Some people believe] that all that should be done is simply to wait for results to appear and for karma and destiny to fulfil itself. Then and not till then, all will be well. But they forget that karma fulfils itself in relation to the form nature upon which it expends its energy and that where there is a static condition and a quiescent attitude, the process moves but slowly; the life then within the form fails to experience the needed, forceful awakening; inevitably then there lies ahead a repetition of the process until the time comes when activity and response is

evoked. This then leads to resistance to the apparent karmic necessity and this brings about liberation. Only through resistance to evil (and in this world period and in this kali-yuga, as the Eastern teachers call it, it is an essential basic attitude) can karma be brought to an end.”

And it goes on to say that it is the:

“refusal to cooperate in this period of karmic necessity, that is prolonging the difficult and cruel situation . . .”

So may we take the longest stride of soul people have ever taken. May we rise again with renewed commitment and press forward in service and do better to make goodwill a real game changer in the world. May we all fulfil our part in the One Work through complete self-forgetfulness, a dynamic and practical harmlessness, and always right speech. May we also always think and act with compassion towards all, and that this must include the sad and deluded perpetrators of atrocity.

I think it is appropriate to finish with a prayer found on a scrap of paper in the Ravensbrück concentration camp.

“O Lord, remember not only the men and women of good will, but also those of ill will. But do not remember all the suffering they have inflicted on us, remember the fruits we have bought, because of this suffering – our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart that has grown out of all of this, and when they come to judgement, let all the fruits we have borne be their forgiveness.”