

Festival of Sagittarius, London, December 2019

The Fires of Group Endeavour

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Welcome to all who are working with us this evening – both near and far. This Sagittarian full moon sets the direction of travel as we approach the Festival Week of the New Group of World Servers (21-28 December). The festival will be conditioned by the potent energies of Capricorn and in this preceding sign of Sagittarius, the goal to be achieved in Capricorn – that of empowering the work of the New Group of World Servers – is held firmly in mind. The symbol of Sagittarius is the arrow, and it is “upon the flight of the arrow, [that] the man reaches Capricorn.” It is in Sagittarius that we see the goal ahead, pull back the string of the bow to a point of tension, take aim and fire.

Fire is the operative word here, as Sagittarius is a fire sign, and in esotericism, much is said about moving from the fire of one burning ground to another. On the path of discipleship this takes place in group formation, and in connection with Sagittarius and its theme of firing the arrow of aspiration towards a new goal, one of the rules for group initiation is particularly instructive: *Let the group onward move – out of the fire, into the cold, and toward a newer tension.* In the attempt to understand what this rule means, an analogy that comes to mind is the transition that occurs at the end of a scorching summer’s day. As the heat and light dissipate, so do the surroundings give way to a new perspective. In the cool night air, the canopy of stars emerges. There is a feeling of inner expansion as thoughts turn away from the day’s concerns to the mystery of the countless points of light burning in the overarching darkness.

Similarly, after experiencing all that life in the physical world has to offer, there is a feeling of being overheated – burnt out, depleted. Accordingly, as these daily concerns lose their appeal, the clear light from a new inner world rises on the horizon of consciousness. As the inner search continues, innumerable spiritual lights are sensed radiating deep within the universal mind. These lights lead away from the heat of personality life towards the cold fire of the Solar Angel. This all takes place without the sense of being divorced from daily living however and the interconnections remain. The aim of all the inner searching is not escape from the outer world, but to touch and apply the energy of the soul realms to it, in cooperation with the forces of evolution.

At times many of us may feel that we are experiencing the rage of a burning ground experience but not having much success in passing out of it. At this point in evolution, the whole of humanity is passing through a world burning ground and, as part of humanity, we are all included in this. The pain and sorrows of the world are shared by all, the instantaneous transmission of worldwide events is resulting in a community of suffering, awakening compassion in millions of hearts. It’s difficult to watch the natural disasters, the desperate refugees and migrants, terrorism and the despoiling of the earth’s resources without feeling deep sadness and despair within.

It’s also hard to engage with the chaotic energies of modern life without getting sucked into the maelstrom. But we are living in a time when tremendous forces are pouring into the planet and stimulating both good and evil; and although it’s an ordeal, it is also a time of unprecedented opportunity. People of goodwill everywhere are rising to the challenge and turning to some form of service. The challenge for esotericists is to do likewise and to serve humanity by directing energy in meditation. Having this goal in mind changes the perspective of spiritual training and service. Passing through our own individual burning ground has to be for one aim only – the aim of becoming better equipped to help humanity, as a whole, to pass through the world burning ground and into a clearer light.

Let’s pause here for a few moments of reflection and then say together an Ancient Prayer:

Lead us, O Lord, from darkness to light;
from the unreal to the real;

from death to immortality.
OM

Inevitably, those who undergo training in meditation pass through burning grounds because it is a process that quickens spiritual unfoldment. Meditation practice results in regular energy impacts, lighting up the fires of aspiration and burning up all the dross. Commonsense and moderation must be practised, keeping in control of the process and not allowing it to become a spiritual drama. Feeling consumed by the flames of a burning ground can spark the glimmers of fear and self-absorption resulting in the unwary aspirant becoming engrossed with his or her own psychological pain. The heat of the purificatory fires then becomes “the all-absorbing theme of the personality” – instead of being “lost to sight in the ‘glory of the One’.”

There are many different burning ground experiences, and as the name suggests, they are all related to psychological heat. The esoteric fire that burns in the heart “tempers” the aspirant and proceeds to burn up all hindrances. It tempers the mind like steel, firing it with the strength and resilience of the spiritual will. At the same time, it causes a rising up within towards a new-found state of freedom. An ancient stanza states:

Above the clouds of earth, a sign shines forth.... Only the eye of vision sees this sign... Only an understanding of the law which elevates and lifts can teach the man of fire and son of water to enter into mist. From thence he climbs on to the mountain top [of Capricorn] and there again stands free. It is a freedom, triple in its kind, which greets the man who passes...on to the burning ground of sacrifice. The sun augments the fire; it dissipates the mist and dries the earth. And thus the work is done.¹

In this way consciousness expands and rises towards the Soul. Just as the air above a physical fire expands and rises through the transmutation of the elements within it, so the fire in the heart of the pilgrim transmutes the elements of thought, raising the mind into the realm of universal love. Correct spiritual temperature governs this process. The temperature of a substance is determined by the motion of its particles, and it's interesting that the term ‘degrees of freedom’ is often used in physics to describe this rate of motion. The more energy the particles have, the more they dissociate themselves from one another, and the substance may undergo transfiguration such as ice into water, water into steam, etc. Similarly, disciples achieve increasing “degrees of freedom” as the fire of the Soul causes rapid vibration in the vehicles of consciousness. The point of transfiguration and a rising out of the personal self culminates in more expansive and inclusive states of consciousness.

When this takes place, the aspirant's more energised state of consciousness has risen through increased vibration and now has to be stabilized in the pure cold light of reason emanating from the buddhic plane. As it does so, the warmth of love and compassion radiates out to “fire the world with the spirit of relationship” and likewise to stimulate human consciousness towards new degrees of freedom. When heat is divorced from moisture, the resulting “dry alchemical fires” can aid the evolutionary process. The moisture of the astral body, which expresses itself through the emotional nature, does not enter into the esoteric work. Instead it is the dry fires of Agni, Lord of the mental plane, fanned by the airy love of Indra, Lord of the Buddhic plane, that burn the disciple up in joy and bliss.

For those advanced initiates who specialize in this particular path, it culminates in the passage through a triple burning-ground that is found "upon the mountain top, being kept alive and flaming by all the winds of heaven." This is a beautiful image to hold in the mind's eye and serves to raise the consciousness to fleetingly touch the nature of a future reality. Such imagery stimulates the imagination and powers of creative visualization, two powerful faculties that should never be underestimated. In the Tibetan's words, “Those sons of men who at this time search for the ‘heat of the love nature’ of the human unit and who add to that search a cultivation of a vivid imagination and an intense power to visualize are working towards responsiveness to heat and a knowledge of rhythm.”²

This is an important statement to consider in the context of the energies of Sagittarius – a responsiveness to heat and a knowledge of rhythm...

Perhaps rhythm is one of the hardest things to cultivate in these chaotic times, when there are so many things demanding attention and continuing crises, which may leave one at the mercy of time rather than commanding it. Sagittarius is an opportune place to address this, for it is a time to consolidate our forces after the trials of Scorpio, to fix our eyes upon the goal, and rhythmically work our way towards it. Then the problems of energy dissipation are resolved, and the personality life conforms to the plans of the Soul. Some words from the book *Esoteric Astrology* are pertinent here:

Sagittarius marks another point of balance which follows after that testing, for the Archer has to acquire and hold a steady eye, hand and stance prior to firing the arrow which, when rightly directed and correctly followed, will carry him through the portal of initiation...

In studying Sagittarius, it becomes obvious that one of the major underlying themes is that of Direction. The Archer is guiding his horse towards some one specific objective; he is sending or directing his arrow towards a desired point; he is aiming at some specific goal. This sense of direction or guidance is characteristic of the enlightened man, of the aspirant and disciple, and this is a growing recognition; when this faculty of sensitive direction is rightly developed it becomes, in the early stages, an effort to identify all soul and personality activity with God's Plan, and this is, in the last analysis, the ordered direction of God's thought. There is no true direction apart from thought, and I would have you remember that thought is power. This is a statement upon which all disciples should ponder. (pg.189/90)

An inspiring message to take into our meditation during the full moon of Sagittarius: "Thought is Power." Such simple, but such significant words. Over the full moon period our thoughts are directed to realising some aspect of the Plan which will help humanity see and take its next step forward. We work within a great variety of influences and where there is sensitivity to these forces, thoughts provide direction and, to reach the goal ahead, fiery aspiration can set up a cycle of invocation-evocation. Working together with others around the world at the full moon in group meditation sets up a fiery, magnetic field, directing the creative imagination to build thoughtforms of service.

Interestingly, the planetary ruler of Sagittarius, from the standpoint of the path of discipleship, is the Earth itself which is a non-sacred planet. The Earth is also the hierarchical ruler of Gemini, the polar opposite of Sagittarius. We are told that "These are the only two constellations ruled by the Earth, and this fact is of major significance, creating an unusual situation in the solar system and a unique relation. The cosmic line of force from Gemini to Sagittarius and the reverse is subjectively and esoterically related to our Earth, thus guaranteeing its soul development, the unfoldment of form as an expression of that soul, and leading our sorrowful humanity upon this woeful planet inevitably to the very gate of initiation in Capricorn."

This is a positive vision to hold in mind at this time when our relationship to the Earth and its kingdoms of nature are growing rapidly in the public mind. We are not only seeing extreme climate in the devastation caused by raging fires such as those in Australia and California, floods, droughts and other natural disasters in other parts of the world, but also poverty driving people to destroy forests and further adding to the problem. From an esoteric perspective we know that the axis of the earth is shifting and that with the cycling in of the 7th ray, which governs the physical-etheric planes, the forms of the coming civilization will inevitably have to adapt and change. Nevertheless, this is no excuse for non-action – the polluted state of the planet is a direct result of humanity's misuse. As each kingdom, lower and higher, has its own goals and destiny, humanity's role is to stand midway and to better understand its relationship to them.

To the watching Hierarchy, it is humanity's effort to change and improve that counts, and, from an esoteric perspective, it's the inner environment where solutions lie, as corrective energies flow from the spiritual realms to effect positive change once the necessary purification of physical, emotional and

mental environment has taken place. Although the recent Madrid climate change conference has again demonstrated the lack of will by some to meet targets, Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary-General, highlighted recognition of the need for “rapid and profound change in the way Humanity does business, generates energy, builds cities, moves and feeds itself, eliminating our addiction to carbon.” With the urgency of climate change, increasing numbers of people worldwide are coming to the same realisation and there is a realistic hope of rekindling international co-operation and of establishing a means of protecting nature’s resources. Because the vital resources of the planet are the domain of all humanity, and not just that of the man-made nations in which they are found, they should be overseen and protected as such, as the Tibetan predicted.

It’s also interesting to note another prediction found in *A Treatise in Cosmic Fire*: where it says that “a very interesting development may be looked for during the [21st century]. This is the intensification of business organisation, and the bringing (under law and order), of the entire life of: Families and groups of families, Cities and groups of cities, Nations and groups of nations, until the human race in every department of its exoteric life will conform to rule,—this voluntarily, and with manasic realisation of group need...“the whole trend of mental effort during the next subraces will be towards the synthesis of endeavour, thus ensuring the good of the corporate body involved. Many interesting events will occur and many experiments will necessarily be made (some to prove successful and some failures), before manas, or purposeful, ordered, intelligent activity, will control in the life of the peoples of this world.”

It’s never known what direction humanity will decide to follow but lets focus positively on the keynote for the disciple in Sagittarius “I see the goal, I reach that goal, and then I see another” as we gather our forces in meditation. We magnetise the path of approach in order to realise the opportunity for regeneration and transformation before us.

1 Esoteric Psychology II, p199

2 A Treatise on Cosmic Fire, p.1251

3 Esoteric Psychology II, p.698