

Paris and the Shaken Heart of Humanity

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We meet today in somber circumstances. The human heart remains shaken by the events that happened just over a week ago in Paris.

As we hold the shaken heart in the light it is important to affirm with every fiber of our substance that humanity is one living being; a kingdom of nature working out its destiny, in process of becoming a species characterized by love and creative intelligence, purposefully applied. As spiritual traditions throughout the ages have always affirmed, Rishis, Saints, Masters and enlightened beings watch over this evolutionary process – guiding and guarding, impressing ideas and applying doses of spiritualized energy. Our lives, each one of us, are inextricably linked to this process.

It is through our personal and collective responses to the traumas and crises of history, such as the Paris events, that the human family is becoming a global community learning to share resources, protect human rights, and to steward, mentor and care for all the creatures, birds, animals, plants and minerals of the Earth. There is no single way in which this is happening. Unity emerges through diversity. The human spirit is One but it expresses itself in an incredibly rich variety of diversity – through freedom each individual person, culture, faith, nation and region is developing unique qualities to bring to the whole.

Paris is a city that lives in the collective imagination as a city of romance, of joie de vivre, love, refinement in food, art, design, thought – a city where beauty and joy are valued. It is a city that has been featured in countless films, watched by millions of people all over the globe; a city associated with humanity's quest for Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. It is as if humanity as a whole feels that it knows Paris and Parisians and, in a way, is in love with its dream of the city and the city's people. For esotericists brought up on the Bailey teachings, Paris is also considered to be the capital city of a nation destined to provide irrefutable scientific evidence for the reality of the soul.

So with all of this in mind it is not surprising that the violence that erupted in Paris, was such a shock to the heart – individually and collectively. This decade has been marked by countless occasions when innocent people are killed in the name of separative ideologies that look back to the past and reject the power of universal love. This has happened in Lebanon, Nigeria, Kenya, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan and most recently in Mali – but it has taken the events in Paris to shock the world.

So during this time of the full moon, when the lighted faces of Angels, Masters and Rishis turn the full intensity of their gaze onto the world of the human, let us ponder where we are as a

species, where we are headed, and what it means for individuals to tread a spiritual path at this time.

As we prepare for our work together it might be helpful to begin with silence – imagining that we are entering the silence of that secret quiet place at the very core of our being. Together, let us still the active creative mind. Now into this silence imagine a point of light - living, radiant light. Imagine projecting that point of light as a beam – directed and focused upwards – a beam of light revealing a Greater Light – revealing a Reality so full of Presence and Electrical, Spiritual Fire that it needs to be shielded by a Disc of Golden Light. Hold this image of the beam of directed focused light illumining the way into the center of the Greater Light, and sound together the Gayatri.

O Thou Who givest sustenance to the universe,
From Whom all things proceed
To Whom all things return,
Unveil to us the face of the true Spiritual Sun
Hidden by a disc of golden Light
That we may know the Truth
And do our whole duty
As we journey to Thy sacred feet.

Every sign brings with it a particular quality of light that can be used and worked with in meditation. In Sagittarius it is said that this is the quality of a beam of directed focused light, illumining the way forward and clarifying purpose. It reminds us of an arrow shot from the bow and headed directly to the target.

In an esoteric sense light enables the one whose mind is increasingly becoming preoccupied with the spiritual path to part the veils that obscure the view of that which lies beyond the human realms of consciousness. Light enables the world to be seen from the vantage point, the altitude, of the soul.

So the opportunity of this sign, for the mentally alert seeker, is to redefine purpose in alignment with the soul's vision in such a way that one's whole orientation to the path and to life is affected. Where the personality tends to see the world as if it is the center of its own universe, the soul sees the world from the higher vantage point of the Communion of Saints, Rishis and Enlightened Masters. The soul's purpose is to contribute to the transformation of humanity itself – awakening the universal spirit in the worlds of human culture, art, professions and thought: economics and governance, education and literature. This all sounds very grand, and in its immature emotional expression can carry with it grandiose fantasies of inflated self-importance. For the mature person on the Path it simply means that the individual begins to see the purpose of their own life in synchronicity with the bigger transformation occurring in consciousness. Steps forward on the path of spiritual or ethical living are often small. It's

through countless small steps that a spiritual life is crafted, anchored and grounded. It's how we learn to love and it's how we discover something of the sacrificial, spiritual will. As soul light shines into these small steps they begin to be seen as part of the small steps being taken by humanity as a whole as it prepares for initiation.

There is an intriguing comment about one of the keynotes of Sagittarius in Alice Bailey's book on *Esoteric Astrology*. It relates to the changing images for the sign. In ancient time it was often symbolized by the Centaur – the mythical creature which was half man and half horse – emphasizing the soul's work of putting down roots in the physicality of the human experience – selfish, identified with form, personal desire and ambition. Alice Bailey writes of this stage in development as 'attached duality'. The soul is bound to the animal human and has little means of control or direction. Through time the centaur began to be replaced as a symbol for Sagittarius by the image of the archer riding a white horse. The archer is in control, directing the horse with his knees and thighs and this is described as a period of 'unattached duality' – soul and personality are both present in consciousness and at times a source of conflict and tension. But in our time, when human spirituality has become a factor in the intelligent mind of countless individuals, the image has narrowed in to focus just on the bow and arrow. The archer astride the horse fades out of view and all that is left is the drawn bow and the arrow poised and ready to be released so that it can find its mark. It is an image full of dynamic tension – nothing can stop the inevitable trajectory of the arrow, straight and true. No deviation is possible.

It is the keynote associated with this final image that is intriguing. The keynote for the centaur is 'attached or fused duality'; for the archer it is 'unattached duality' for the bow and arrow it is 'Freedom or one-pointedness'. It is so unusual to think of one-pointedness as freedom, suggesting that the die has been cast – that in drawing the bow and aligning the arrow with the target, in the total focus of the archer looking along the arrow towards the target, there is a freedom. A choice has been made – purpose is clear. All the choices, uncertainties, fears and questions that accompany duality have dissolved into a moment of total absorption with goal and purpose. One-pointedness is freedom.

Other keynotes also given for the sign are equally revealing. For example the 'clear shaft of light' that marks the speed and trajectory of the arrow once the taut bow has been released reflects the *intuitive and focused attitude of the pledged disciple*. This is also captured in the phrase: *I vision*. For those treading the spiritual path Sagittarian energy is all about the mind penetrating through the veil into ever higher levels of sight, wisdom and understanding. The goal that is the target of thought and aspiration is the greater light, first of the soul and then of the Triad.

Sagittarius has much to teach us about the intuition. There is an image of the mind as a taut bow, releasing arrows of directed purposeful thought towards that which is unknown. But this is only the first part of the story. The key insight is that the arrow returns as intuitive insight and fresh understandings. Fresh insight shines in the mind of the disciple. Over time that insight

becomes the source of reflection and pondering. It begins to be applied in the life, acting as a yeast, revealing new opportunities for service. Intuitive perception changes the one who experiences it because of its fresh livingness. An intuition is known to be True and Real, directly known, and because of this it can be communicated with simplicity without losing any of its essential potency. *Take the knowledge which is yours*, we are advised, and *adjust its application to the world's need*. That is the thought which needs to be held onto at this full moon. Identify those few living truths that are known to have come with the returning arrow of the intuition and consider how those truths apply to some of the big conversations and events of the time.

And so we return to Paris and to a consideration of where we are as a species, where we are headed, and what it means for individuals to tread a spiritual path at this time. The deep shock that an event like Paris can bring to a person who is already alive to some relationship with the soul is that it can serve to wake them up and help them to see that their orientation, their purpose actually matters in the world.

The violence unleashed in Paris reflects the despair of the human spirit that sees no way out of lifeless materialism and of the denial of the sacred, of all that is Good and Right and True. This despair can only be answered by human beings whose life is oriented to the abundance, the beauty, the richness and sacredness of Life. Individuals, groups, professions, nations and peoples must stand for Life and Right Relations. The desire for a secure and free future for all can never be fulfilled by armies or protective fences or fear of strangers. What is needed is for the energy invested in expressing love in every field of life to deepen, strengthen, and become smarter. And that happens through the countless spiritual choices, often small choices, of millions of people.

In all the commentary following the Paris attack, one piece in the Huffington Post stood out for me. It was by the co-founder of the Presencing Institute, a senior lecturer at MIT, Otto Scharma, and its title is 'Paris: Shifting the Heart of the Collective'. In the article Scharma speaks of the root cause of the conflict as being not only personal frustrations and grievances of young Muslims around the world who are drawn by the sense of meaning and vision offered by ISIS but also the quality of thought, the mindset, that is being used to address these problems from all sides.

Disruptions, terrorist attacks, extreme climate events, financial meltdowns are happening with increasing rapidity Scharma argues. While we cannot control the disruptions we can control how we respond to them. In the conversations that arise following disruptions there are those who propose cosmetic changes that will enable us to muddle through, those who want to move apart, build huge walls that separate us off from all the dangers that appear to come from outside and those who accept some responsibility for being part of the problem and want to take responsibility for co-creating a solution. Scharma argues that the third view is the only one that offers any hope. *Real solutions must include the entire global eco-system of players in collaborative and co-creative ways*. They require economic, political, moral and spiritual responses to the root causes of terrorism.

He sees two clashing mindsets in response to the problems of our time: **Presencing** – *that is, the capacity of co-sensing and co-shaping the future by enacting a social architecture of connection; and the field of **absencing** – that is, the field of "building up walls", by enacting a social architecture of separation.*

The real battle of our time is not between religions, and also not between ISIS and Western countries. The real battle of our time is between the forces of "absencing" (economies of fear and destruction), and the forces of "presencing" (economies of courage and creation). It's a battle that takes place across all levels of systems.

Openhearted courage is called for in response to the fundamentalist mindset represented by ISIS. So Sharma suggests that the news from Europe of recent weeks that is more historically significant than the Paris attacks is the news of the rise of countless citizens and *self-organizing groups and communities, the rise of many local politicians, who keep providing help for refugees on a massive scale.* There is, in Sharma's words, something miraculous about the visionary courage being shown, particularly in Germany, in response to the needs of the refugees. He concludes: *The Paris attacks wounded us collectively, and therefore call on us to rise and catalyze the one shift that now matters most – the shift of the heart.*

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/otto-scharmer/parisshifting-the-heart-o_b_8591364.html

In the light of Sagittarius, and in response to the tremendous shaking of the heart caused by the Paris attacks let us visualize a new sense of authentic purpose arising in millions of human beings from every culture and region of the world. Purpose shaped by a shift in the heart.

In less than a week, next Monday, Paris will again be in the spotlight of global thought when the UN Climate Conference begins. In many ways this Paris can be expected to represent an important step in responding to the disruptions that are accompanying the end of the age of separation. We should be looking for courageous leadership in crafting new structures of governance and economics based on interdependence. We should be expecting a resolve to end reliance on fossil fuels. Because the heart was shaken and hurt by last week's events in Paris we should expect to see signs of the courageous heart during next week's events in Paris.

For those not already working with World Goodwill's Cycle of Conferences visualisation focused on the Paris conference please consider adding it to your daily schedule of meditations. Find the visualization and enroll in the Cycles Initiative at www.worldgoodwill.org/cycle.
