

Labour VI: Seizing the Girdle of Hippolyte Virgo, August 22nd - September 21st

The Myth

The great Presiding One called unto him the Teacher watching over Hercules. "The time is drawing near," he said, "how fares the son of man who is a son of God? Is he prepared again to venture forth and try his mettle with a foe of a different sort? Can he now pass the 6th great Gate? "

And the Teacher answered: "Yes." He was assured within himself that when the word went forth the disciple would arise to labours new, and this he told the great Presiding One within the Council Chamber of the Lord.

And then the word went forth. "Arise, O Hercules, and pass the sixth great Gate." Another word likewise went forth, though not to Hercules, but unto those who dwelt upon the shores of the great sea. They listened and they heard.

Upon those shores dwelt the great queen, who reigned o'er all the women of the then known world. They were her vassals and her warriors bold. Within her realm, of men not one was found. Only the women, gathered round their queen. Within the temple of the moon they daily worshipped and there they sacrificed to Mars, the god of war.

Back from their annual visit to the haunts of men they came. Within the temple precincts they awaited word from Hippolyte, their queen, who stood upon the steps of the high altar, wearing the girdle given her by Venus, queen of love. This girdle was a symbol, a symbol of unity achieved through struggle, conflict, strife, a symbol of motherhood and of the sacred Child to whom all human life is truly turned.

"Word has gone forth," said she, "that on his way there comes a warrior whose name is Hercules, a son of man and yet a son of God; to him I must give up this girdle which I wear. Shall we obey the word, O Amazons, or shall we fight the word of God?" And as they listened to her words and as they pondered o'er the problem, again a word went forth, saying that he was there, ahead of time, waiting without to seize the sacred girdle of the fighting queen.

Forth to the son of God who was likewise a son of man went Hippolyte, the warrior queen. He fought and struggled with her and listened not to the fair words she strove to speak. He wrenched the girdle from her, only to find her hands held out and offering him the gift, offering the symbol of unity and love, of sacrifice and faith. Yet, grasping it, he slaughtered her, killing the one who cowered him with that which he required. And as he stood beside the dying queen, aghast at that which he had done, he heard his Teacher speak:

"My son, why slay that which is needed, close and dear? Why kill the one you love, the giver of good gifts, custodian of the possible? Why kill the mother of the sacred Child? Again, we mark a failure. Again you have not understood. Redeem this moment, e'er again you seek my face."

Silence fell and Hercules, gathering the girdle to his breast, sought out the homeward way, leaving the women sorrowing, bereft of leadership and love.

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Unto the shores of the great sea again came Hercules. Close to the rocky shore he saw a monster of the deep, holding between his jaws poor Hesione. Her shrieks and sighs rose to high heaven and smote the ears of Hercules, lost in regret and knowing not the path he trod. Unto her help he promptly rushed, but rushed too late. She disappeared within the cavernous throat of the sea serpent, that monster of ill fame. But losing sight of self, this son of man who was a son of God breasted the waves and reached the monster, who, turning towards the man with swift attack and roaring loud, opened his mouth. Down the red tunnel of his throat rushed Hercules, in search of Hesione; finding her deep within the belly of the monster. With his left arm he seized her, and held her close whilst with his trusty sword he hewed his way from out the belly of the serpent into the light of day. And so he rescued her, balancing thus his previous

deed of death. For such is life: an act of death, a deed of life, and thus the sons of men, who are the sons of God, learn wisdom, balance and the way to walk with God.

From out the Council Chamber of the Lord, the great Presiding One looked on. And from his post beside, the Teacher too looked on. Through the sixth Gate again passed Hercules, and seeing this and seeing both the girdle and the maid, the Teacher spoke and said: "Labour the sixth is over. You slaughtered that which cherished you and all unknown and all unrecognised gave unto you the needed love and power. You rescued that which needed you, and thus again the two are one. Ponder anew upon the ways of life, reflecting on the ways of death. Go rest, my son."

- THE TIBETAN

Introduction

It is said that, from some aspects, Virgo is the oldest of the zodiacal signs. Down through the ages, be it Lilith or Isis, Eve or the Virgin Mary, all portray the mother of the world, but it is Mary who at length bears the Child in her arms. And it is in this sign that the Christ consciousness is conceived and nurtured through the period of gestation until at last in Pisces, the opposite sign, the world saviour is born.

As in Leo, this is a cave experience, "in the womb of time", and should be characterised by warmth, quietness, deep experiences and "slow, yet powerful crises". **It is a synthetic sign.** On this point the Tibetan says: "The symbology of Virgo concerns the whole goal of the evolutionary process, which is to shield, nurture and finally reveal the hidden spiritual reality. This, every form veils but the human form is equipped and fitted to manifest it in a manner different from any other expression of divinity and so make tangible and objective that for which the whole creative process was intended." (*Esoteric Astrology*, p. 251–2)

This synthetic quality is further emphasised by the fact that eight other signs (all except Leo, Libra and Capricorn) through their planetary rulers pour their energies through Virgo, and the Tibetan calls attention to the fact that we are now entering the eighth sign from Virgo, in other words, the next sign before that in which the Child is brought to birth, the sign which will see many take initiation. It is to be remembered that all men and women pass through all signs, and for those born in Virgo, or having that sign on the ascendant (the eastern point of the chart, indicating the soul purpose of the disciple) these qualities or energies are displayed in many ways, for organisations, arts, sciences, all call for long periods of mental gestation and the struggle of bringing forth new ideas into manifestation.

Another unique feature of Virgo is that it has a triple symbol, which only one other sign, Scorpio, has. This is significant, implying that these two signs are "connected with the growth of Christ consciousness. They mark critical points in the soul's experience, points of integration, wherein the soul is consciously at-one-ing itself with the form and at the same time with spirit." (*Esoteric Astrology*, p. 481). This statement underlies the spiritual theory of Triangles, which are many, the Tibetan adds these august and arresting words: "Under the will of Deity and the unalterable energy at the heart of the manifested zodiac, they produce the changes in consciousness that make man divine at the close of the world cycle." And further: "It is through the fusing and blending of the three planetary energies, *by the agency of human thought, reacting to zodiacal energies*, that our earth will be transformed into a sacred planet." (*Editor's italics.*) Surely these words expand our vision, deepen our understanding, give us faith in the future of humanity, and strength to co-operate patiently with the present.

Interpretations of the Myth

The story of the myth related that the great Presiding One recognised that this labour was indeed with an enemy "of a different sort". It is interesting that the two labours which Hercules, though he won eventually, performed badly were with his polar opposites, females. In Aries the conquering of the man-eating mares so inflated his ego that he stalked on ahead in pride and left the mares to Abderis, his personality, with the result that they escaped and the labour had to be repeated. "But Abderis lay dead." And in the labour in Virgo, he slayed the queen of the Amazons, though she offered him the girdle, and then he had to rescue another maiden, Hesione, from the belly of the whale, to compensate for the life he had unnecessarily taken.

So the war between the sexes is of ancient origin; indeed is inherent in the duality of humanity and the solar system. To this fact our divorce courts bear loud testimony; and competition arises in business as well as in the home. There are small but important points in the story not to be overlooked. What did Hippolyte contribute to the error? Perhaps this: she proffered to Hercules the girdle of unity, given her by Venus, because she had been told that the Presiding One had so ordered, not because she felt unity. Did she do it under compulsion but with no love? And so she died. Even so we are told that evil must come, but woe betide those by whom it comes, and so Hercules failed to understand his spiritual mission, though he obtained its objective.

Again, one wonders why the Amazons made a yearly sortie into the world of men? Was it to make war on them, or was it to seek unity, in which there was no heart? Was it to seek new members for their man-less world? But God, we are told, looks at the heart. It will come as a shock to many of strict, legally moral views to reflect that an avowed prostitute may be superior to a woman who adds blasphemy to prostitution, when she takes vows in church without love and with no intent to serve, but only to obtain money, security or position. One seldom hears a sermon on the woman taken in adultery, of whom the Christ said, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go in peace and sin no more." All of this seems subtly involved in the myth of the labour in Virgo. Its practical application as well as its cosmic and spiritual significances are startling. We are told that the "war with *purpose* between the sexes is now at a climax."

This time the Teacher did not say merely that the work was badly done. He said without equivocation, "Why kill the mother of the sacred Child? Again we mark a failure. Again you have not understood. Redeem this moment e'er again you seek my face." These were stern words and we should listen to the keynote. "Again you have not understood". And silence fell, and Hercules, gathering the girdle to his breast, sought out the homeward way, leaving the women sorrowing and bereft of leadership and love.

The act of death; then a deed of love when, at the risk of his own life, Hercules rescued Hesione and earned from the Teacher the words: "Ponder anew upon the ways of life, reflecting on the ways of death. Go rest, my son." We offer no apologies for repeating the words of the myth as told by the Tibetan; they are superlatively beautiful and their mantric power seems destroyed by paraphrasing them.

It is to be noted also that the labour was not described to Hercules as in other cases. The word went out only to the country where the queen of the Amazons ruled her woman's world, all men excluded. It was left for Hercules to understand the nature of the labour, and he did not. Also the Amazons worshipped the moon (the form), and Mars, the god of war; they too did not understand their true function, for Mary is pictured with the moon under her feet, and in her arms the one to be known as the Prince of Peace.

The Two Ways

As always there is a choice for good or evil before the native of a sign, depending on his status of evolution and the degree of sensitivity. Virgo is called the goddess of virtue or of vice. But what is the root meaning of "vice"? "To render ineffective", and that for Virgo is to negate the whole purpose of the sign, for it is said that "the Christ is to her the purpose of existence." The root of "virtue" is the Latin word *vir* meaning "strength", "man", as in "virility". The deep meaning of vice as an ineffectiveness of the spiritual life, reminds one again of the explanation of the saying in one of the Rules of the Road: "For each must know the villainy of each and still love on". For it appears that a villain in this sense is merely a narrow-minded, rather uncouth fellow, a dweller in a small village, who knows nothing beyond his own small ring-pass-not.

How obvious, and what breeders of true tolerance, are these root meanings. Too long have we belaboured the body, the physical, as the root of all evil, when it is really our narrow minds, our hard, small hearts, that cause wrong attitudes and habits; the body being but an automatic response apparatus, subject to the control of the inner man. Another idea presents itself in this connection, i.e., that "sin" means literally "anything that is done amiss". Just not hitting the "bull's eye", the "eye of illumination" spoken of in Taurus, is a sin for the son of man who is also a son of God. How perfectly these fundamental ideas interplay and confirm each other, when we abandon the complexities of the lower

mind. Virgo is also called the "goddess of the two ways", because as the Holy Mother principle she symbolises matter and also is the custodian of the Christ life.

It is meaningful that this sixth sign, the number of physical plane activity, is called the number of the Beast. This idea seems to have a horrible fascination for many, but what it really means is that Virgo is a symbol of the triplicity, 6 on the physical plane, 6 on the emotional plane, 6 on the mental plane, not 666 at all.

It is to be remembered that the lion is the king of beasts. The native attains finally in that sign the rounded-out personality. But in Virgo, the first of the steps towards spirituality is taken, the soul is called the son of mind, and Virgo is ruled by Mercury, carrying the energy of the mind.

In this Virgo lecture A.A.B. gave a most interesting sequence of prophetic references to the Virgin as follows:

"Behold, I will bring forth my servant, the *branch*". (*Zechariah 3:8*). One symbol of Virgo is the woman with the ear of corn, or the sheaf of wheat, or the branch of fruit in her arms. Remember also the prophecy in *Isaiah* upon which our New Testament is based: "And a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son", and link up with that verse in *Ephesians* when St. Paul said that some day we shall attain unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. I would remind you that Christ laid the emphasis again and again on the new birth rather than on blood sacrifice. The esoteric meaning is "the blood is the life". We are always too literal. Even as the old practice of offering slain animals at the altar passed, so should pass the idea of atonement by the blood of Christ. That was born of the medieval guilt complex and the torturing of the physical instrument as a means to produce the dominance of the spirit; when the truth is that the body should be attuned to the soul and bring its beauty into manifestation, redeem it. All this is implicit in the sign of the Virgin and its labour. In *The Secret Doctrine* is a clear statement of the whole message of this sign: "Matter is the vehicle for the manifestation of soul on this turn of the spiral; and soul is the vehicle on a higher turn of the spiral for the manifestation of spirit, and these three are a trinity synthesised by Life which pervades them all".

The Constellations and Stars

The three constellations in close proximity to that of Virgo are: *Coma Berenice*, the mother of the form only; the *Centaur*, the man riding upon a horse or the horse with a man's head and torso, representing the human being, for man is an animal plus a god. This is the lowest of the constellations and it is notable that Hercules, though he had passed through five Gates, failed at the sixth Gate, and had to begin again at the bottom, and make reparation for his lack of love and understanding. It often happens to advanced disciples. The third constellation holding promise of the future is *Bootes*, "the one who is coming", the saviour in Pisces who frees humanity from subservience to the form.

Virgo itself is a cup-shaped constellation with three main stars outlining it, the cup of communion, of which the Christ said "Drink ye all of it"; in its highest meaning the Holy Grail. The brightest star is *Spica*, which means "the ear of corn." Christ was born in Bethlehem, which means "the house of bread". We say, "Give us this day our daily bread", manna, bread from heaven, or the bread and wine of the communion. Ever this symbology of bread runs through the Old and New Testaments, and today our great economic problem still remains to furnish bread, a symbol of food, to a hungry world: bread for the body and bread for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. All this as part of the nurturing function of the mother of the world, who nourishes the form and also the Christ-consciousness latent in the form.

The Mutable Cross and the Planetary Rulers

Virgo is one of the arms of the **mutable cross**, with its opposite sign of **Pisces**, and the airy **Gemini** and fiery **Sagittarius** completing the four arms. It is the common cross of those who have probationary status. Its description is as follows: "The mutable cross is the **cross of the Holy Spirit**, of the third person of the Christian trinity, as it organises substance and evokes sensitive response from substance itself." (Note the beautiful correlation of this statement with the fact that the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary.)

On this cross the man reaches the stage of *acquiescence and aspiration*, and so prepares himself for the fixed cross of discipleship. It is notable that "the mutable cross of the personality dedicates the man who is crucified thereon to material ends in order that he may learn eventually their divine use." "The sin against the Holy Ghost" has been the subject of much morbid wondering. The Tibetan states: "The misuse of substance and the prostitution of matter to evil ends is a sin against the Holy Ghost." It was this sin the greatest of his whole pilgrimage, that Hercules committed in Virgo, when he did not understand that the queen of the Amazons was to be redeemed by unity, not killed. Over and over again the Tibetan emphasises the fact that it is "through the medium of humanity that a consummation of 'light' effectiveness will be produced which will make possible the expression of the whole". We still make the mistake of Hercules, when we forget that the triangle of the Trinity is an equilateral triangle, all angles of equal importance, to the working out of the Plan. (*Esoteric Astrology*, pp. 558 et seq.) It is in Virgo, after complete individualisation in Leo, that the first step toward the union of spirit and matter is made, "the subordination of the form life to the will of the indwelling Christ".

The three rulers of the sign Virgo definitely relate it to eight other signs, as has been noted, making it the outstanding sign of synthesis. Including Virgo itself, we have nine signs or energies inter-playing the number of the months of gestation of the human embryo. Again "as above so below".

The orthodox ruler of the sign is Mercury, "the versatile energy of the son of mind the soul", the intermediary between the Father and Mother. The esoteric ruler is the moon, veiling Vulcan. The moon rules the form and we are again reminded that it is the will of God to manifest through the form. Vulcan is an expression of first ray energy, while the moon exerts fourth ray energy, Jupiter is the hierarchical ruler representing the second creative Hierarchy (divine builders of earth's planetary manifestation), and brings in second ray energy.

The Tibetan points out that Mercury, Saturn and Venus rule the three decanates and he reminds us that when a man is on the reversed wheel of the disciple (counterclockwise) he will enter the sign through the influence of Venus, while the average man will enter under the rulership of Mercury. This is an example of how we may misinterpret a horoscope if we do not know the status of evolution of the native. Mundane astrology, without synthesis, may be very misleading and superficial. Alice Bailey was wont say, with a twinkle in her eye, to a novice who exclaimed how exactly his chart was working out: "That is too bad, if you were living above the solar plexus, your personality chart would not work out so exactly". The chart of the soul will be used in the astrology of the future; not the chart of the personality. This warning is covered in a positive statement by the Tibetan: "The basis of the astrological sciences is the emanation, transmission, and reception of energies and their transmutation into forces by the receiving entity". This defines clearly what should be our attitude at full moon meditations and our use of individual horoscopes. "The point I seek to make here", says the Tibetan, "is that **it is all a question of developed reception and sensitivity.**"

Significance of the Sign and Its Polar Opposite

In the Mermaid, the fish goddess, we have the symbol of the at-one-ment of Virgo with its opposite sign Pisces. Always there is the duality, inherent in us and in the solar system; the second ray of the sun itself being a duality, Love-Wisdom. The lesson for the Virgo native, as stated by Dane Rudhyar in *Gifts of the Spirit*, is to have "a clear realisation that no truth is complete or even real which does not include its opposite, and all that occurs in between." Reminding one again that eight energies play through Virgo that it is a sign of synthesis, Rudhyar states that transfiguration is required rather than transformation.

The three virtues demanded are tolerance, compassion and charity; one grows by becoming ever more inclusive. One of the most serviceable interpretations given is this comment on tolerance, the true nature of tolerance, which mostly as practiced has a tinge of superiority and condescension. Rudhyar says: "Real tolerance goes far deeper than such an attitude of 'live and let live', which is often not without a taint of smugness and self-centered indifference to everything but one's own truth ... It means etymologically 'to bear'. To bear what? The burden of the necessity for change and growth ... The Virgo's typical preoccupation with details of work, with technique, with health and hygiene, with analytical vivisection of himself and others, is actually a focalisation on the negative values of crisis." If the crisis in

Virgo is positively met then, "the substance of consciousness itself is renewed and with this renewal, undertoning it, goes necessarily a re-statement of purpose."

For Pisces, the opposite pole, the keynote given is courage, and the Piscean temperament is called a battlefield, for its message is "liberation," and liberty must be fought for and earned, it cannot be a gift. The climax reads: "All conflicts are absolved, all transitions are resolved into Christ births," which is the climax of the birth of the latent Christ-consciousness in Virgo.

Keynotes

The heights and the depths of this sixth labour are clearly indicated in the keynotes of the sign: On the ordinary wheel the command goes forth in the following words, which constitute the activity of Virgo: "And the word said, 'let matter reign'." Later, upon the wheel of the disciple, the voice emerges from the Virgin herself, and she says: "I am the mother and the child, I, God, I, matter am." The Tibetan adds: "Ponder upon the beauty of this synthesis and teaching and know that you yourself have said the first word as the soul, descending into the womb of time and space in a far and distant time. The time has now come when you can, if you so choose, proclaim your identity with both divine aspects, matter and spirit, the mother and the child." (*Esoteric Astrology*, p. 284–5). The first synthesising keynote is: "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

- *The Labours of Hercules An Astrological Interpretation*, Alice A. Bailey p. 112–124

Virgo:	the Virgin
Element:	Earth sign (as are Taurus and Capricorn)
Quality:	The unique service in Virgo is that both the form and the spirit are nurtured, shielding "Christ in you the hope and glory."
Polar Opposite:	Pisces, a water sign (Christ consciousness revealed as a World Savior).
Rulers:	Exoteric, Mercury; Esoteric, the Moon.
Keywords:	
From the form angle:	Let matter reign.
From the soul angle:	I am the Mother and the Child; I, god, I, matter am.
The Lesson:	In Virgo, the first of the disciple signs, Hercules performs his sixth labor, and seizes the girdle of Hippolyte, the Queen of the Amazons. It is interesting to note that the first labor on the probationary path (Aries) started with a partial failure, and the first labor on the Path of Discipleship is also "done badly, but done." The Disciple must never be off his guard, for there is always the danger of error and of mistake. His very virtues can become his problem and we are told that it is possible even for a high initiate son of God to drop back from the Path of Attainment. His failure is, however, only temporary. Fresh opportunities occur. The consequence of his mistake has been delay, but the day of restoration and of renewal inevitably recurs. In Virgo we have depicted the preparation for the first initiation, the birth of the Christ, called in Christianity the birth of the Christ in the heart. This is a physical plane happening as well as a transcendental one, as we find when we study the signs of Virgo and of Capricorn.