

### Sign of the Initiate

Jan van der Linden

---

The sign of Capricorn is the sign of the goat, climbing in search of food on rocky mountain peaks. As always, there are higher and lower meanings of symbols – material as well as spiritual expressions. So what does this symbol represent? In the lower sense the goat represents the ambitious person, the greedy seeker after the satisfaction of desire. In the spiritual sense it symbolizes the striving aspirant, seeking the satisfaction of their aspiration.

Another symbol associated with Capricorn is the unicorn. The unicorn is a mythical animal, having one long horn like a spear on its brow instead of the goat's two horns. The two have become one, and thus the unicorn represents the initiate.

According to the legend of the battle between the unicorn and the lion, the unicorn uses its long horn to blind the lion by piercing its eyes, and then it kills the lion by piercing its heart. The lion, the king of beasts, stands for the personality. It is defeated by the emergence of the initiate consciousness, symbolized by the unicorn. This emergence of the initiate consciousness leads to the triumph of group consciousness, and of world consciousness, the victory of selflessness and illumination over self-consciousness and selfishness. (EA:155)

Capricorn is an earth sign. This too has different meanings. On the one hand it can be considered as the most material and concrete of the three earth signs. And thus it confronts us with a supreme challenge and test. As we read in *Esoteric Astrology*, “Capricorn connotes density, firm foundations, concretization, the mountain of karma that holds down the struggling soul.” On the other hand, however, Capricorn symbolizes “the mountain of initiation that must eventually be climbed and surmounted.” In these two aspects Capricorn “signifies therefore the great force of liberation that both drives into experience and brings experience to an end.” (p. 435)

This is expressed in the old Commentary through the following beautiful and significantly symbolic affirmation, which can have deep meaning for every disciple on the Path of Ascent:

I am the densest point of all the concrete world. I am a tomb; I also am the womb. I am the rock that sinks itself into the deep matter. I am the mountaintop on which the [disciple] is born, on which the Sun is seen, and that which catches the first rays of light. (EA:432-433)

Thus, the climbing of the mountain, the mountain of initiation, is the spiritual challenge of the sign Capricorn. The cyclic tide of Capricornian energies pouring in during this astrological month (December 21 through January 19) is holding that challenge before us and assisting us in our climbing.

The first initiation, as we know and as we are reminded each year at Christmas, is the birth of the Christ consciousness, the spiritual self, born anew in the human heart. The cave in Bethlehem is actually the cave of the heart. It is within us.

This initiation of the birth has been prepared for during a long time of gestation, of building the “babe in Christ.” Then, “the first initiation marks the beginning of a totally new life and mode of living. It marks the commencement of a new manner of thinking and of conscious perception.” Quoting the Tibetan:

The life of the personality in the three worlds has for eons nurtured the germ of this new life and fostered the tiny spark of light within the relative darkness of the lower nature. This process is now being brought to a close [at the first initiation], though it is not at this stage entirely discontinued, for the newly emerging spiritual self has to learn to walk, to talk and to create; the consciousness is now, however, being focused elsewhere. This leads to much

pain and suffering until the definite choice is made, a new dedication to service is vouchsafed, and the initiate is ready to undergo the Baptism Initiation. (R&I:667)

Many thousands of individuals within humanity have already undergone this birth of the new spiritual self. It is an experience that, for all serious aspirants on the spiritual path – whether conscious of it or not, lies behind them, mostly in an earlier incarnation. “This is factually proved by the lives of those who are consciously and willingly oriented towards the light, who see a wider world than that of their own selfish interests, who are sensitive to the Christ life and to the spiritual consciousness in others and who see an horizon and vistas of contact unperceived by the average person; they realize a possible spiritual achievement, unknown and undesired by those whose lives are conditioned entirely by either the emotions or the lower concrete mind.” (R&I:665-666)

Although the actual birth experience for many has taken place in a previous life, there usually is a reoccurrence and recapitulation of that earlier development in the present life cycle. This then means a strengthened realization of the point reached before, and of the Christ life within. And the true meaning of Christmas each year is that it calls attention to this realization, its significance and its responsibility.

We also rediscover that the task is not yet finished. For, as said, the new spiritual self must learn to walk, speak and create, i.e., the Christ child in us must grow and mature. This is done on the *path of service*, of living from the Soul. It is to this path that the keyword of Capricorn applies: “Lost Am I in light supernal, yet on that light I turn my back.” This was the supreme realization of the Christ entering on His mission on Earth. It is also typical of every world server. We are reminded that the Festival of the World Servers is related to this sign of Capricorn and its key motto.

•

There is another factor of importance in connection with the first initiation. We are told that the experience of the first initiation will become a mass event for large groups within humanity at this time. We can well imagine what it will mean for the future and for the Aquarian age, when the Christ consciousness will be realized on such a large scale. Think of the change in outlook and worldview that would prevail. But in preparation for that to happen, at present “the whole of humanity is passing en masse through the fires that precede the first initiation.” (DINA2:553)

It can be deeply revealing for us to look at the world and what is happening today from this inner perspective. What does this initiation of humanity mean for us in practical terms? We can draw our own conclusions from the words of the Tibetan in this urgent appeal:

There is the demand upon all disciples to *participate* in the effort of humanity, as a whole, to take the first initiation with all the physical relinquishments, and the agony that ever precedes the birth of the Christ in the heart of the individual – only this time it is the hearts of all humanity. Preparatory to this first initiation, there has always to be – individually and now collectively for the first time – the denial of the lower self and the fervid acceptance by the personality of the loss of all the material factors that have held the Soul a prisoner in the womb of time.

Hence, my coworkers, the wide extent of the material destruction to be seen on every hand, the depths of physical poverty into which all people have been and are being plunged, the detachment from *the priority of things* that is being enforced, and the necessity for rebuilding human life on sounder values than the physical. In all this disciples and initiates are today sharing and (when understanding is present and right orientation) the help that those can give who have already undergone the first initiation; is great.

To this you are called, and upon your understanding response to the collective need will depend the rapidity with which you will be enabled to achieve the next expansion of consciousness or initiation that may be, for you as an individual, possible. You have, therefore, to consider your individual response to the demands of your own soul and your

collective response to the collective need. It is the initiate in you, the Christ in you, that is now called to this collective service, and *the radiation today of the Christ spirit, actively present in the hearts of all disciples, is the one thing that can salvage humanity, enable humanity to move forward on to the Path of Discipleship and thus evoke that new spirit that can and will build the new world.* (DINA2:244)

Let us now meditate on this call to service and on this injunction to let the Christ spirit within us radiate and express itself more fully.