



The Sun

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The Spiritual Light which is hidden within the Sun is the most excellent light. It is shining through the hearts of all living creatures in the form of consciousness. The Spiritual Light which is shining within the physical Sun also shines within the heart of every being. This Light is more brilliant than fire or comet. The Light which is shining in the heart of all jivas in the form of consciousness is also shining through the universe in the form of the Heavenly Man and making it a living organism.¹

From the Yajnavalkya Samhita

It is easy to overlook the majesty of the Sun in the sky. Science has demonstrated that the Sun is in a state of constant nuclear fusion, keeping all the planets, including our tiny one, revolving and caught in its gravitational tug-of-war. In fact, if the Sun were to disappear, in mere moments the Earth's temperature would plummet and we would die instantly. However, the Sun is a living, profound, and prevalent symbol of the light, power, and energy of the GAOTU, shining both to physically fuel the entire solar system and all the life on Earth, as well as shining spiritually as a representative of the highest realization. The Sun represents both the individual spark of Divine within (*Atman*) and the complete universal Divine (*Brahman*). Just as the solar system owes its existence to the Sun, we owe our existence to the spiritual center within. I. K. Tamni writes:

...the physical Sun, which we see and which alone science has studied is merely an outer cover of a glorious Reality which pervades and energizes the whole solar system... this Reality is in essence and fundamentally the same as the Reality which is hidden in the heart of every human being. To find and know at first hand this Reality in one's own heart is the ultimate goal of all Spiritual practice and the only means of destroying the illusions and limitations of the lower life.²

"Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you,"³ as Jesus said. The purpose of the Masonic Tradition is to bring each candidate closer to discovering the Reality "hidden in the heart of every human being," for which

¹ Tamni, I.K. *Gayatri: The Daily Religious Practice of the Hindus*. Adyar, Madras, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1974. p.92-93.

² Ibid. p.94.

³ Luke 17:21, King James Version Bible.

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the Sun is the most profound representation. The Sun is such a prevalent symbol in Masonry because the Sun represents the spiritual center at the heart of tradition. Tamni also states:

According to the philosophy of the sages... the whole cognizable universe is the external expression of a transcendent Reality which is beyond the senses and beyond even the scope of the intellect. This Reality, which in common parlance is referred to as God, manifests on the one hand as the inanimate universe which we see around us extending on every side and on different planes, and on the other, in the form of innumerable (individual monads) *jivatmas* who are essentially of the nature of consciousness and who may be considered as active centers in that transcendent Reality.⁴

The tyled Lodge represents the entire cognizable universe: "its length is 'from East to West', its breadth 'from South to North', its height 'from Heaven to Earth', and its depth 'from the surface of the Earth to its Centre'."⁵ The degree of the Fellow Craft is a degree of expansion, which is an awareness of the underlying spiritual reality in the universe, otherwise stated as a theophanic realization, a realization of seeing the GAOTU active and living in the cognizable universe. The primary center of our cognizable universe is the Sun.

There is a plentitude of references to the Sun within Masonic Rites. The Sun, Moon, and Master of the Lodge are affiliated with the three lesser lights. "As the Sun rules the day, and the Moon governs the night, so ought the Master to endeavor to rule and govern his lodge with equal regularity."⁶ The Sun and Moon duality represent in one sense balance and equilibrium. This duality is reminiscent of the *Shiva* and *Shakti* of certain Hindu traditions. The ideal Worshipful Master should rule with the balance and regularity of both the Sun and Moon, or the power and strength of creation, *Shakti*, and that of pure non-manifested consciousness or wisdom, represented by *Shiva*. To rule and govern with equal regularity is to reach perfect realization, and thus balance, of outward manifestation and inner consciousness. The Entered Apprentice purifies the individual self. The Fellow Craft learns to understand manifestation, thus beauty, and the Master Mason approaches the understanding of inner consciousness. It is worth noting here that the Entered Apprentice might be affiliated with the pillar of Strength, as much strength and determination is needed in the beginning of the spiritual journey as one purifies imperfections and barriers. The pillar of Beauty is then affiliated with the Fellow Craft, who through an expansion begins to experience the Divine presence in the world, which is the experience of beauty. The pillar of Wisdom then represents the Master Mason, who having been purified and had his consciousness expanded, has reached a state of knowing the inner reality, and can depart this world in freedom.

The point in the center of a circle symbolizes the internal spirit, and synonymously symbolizes the Sun. The point in the center of a circle is often a symbol for the Sun, where the circle and the Sun are both universal symbols found in all major traditions.

⁴ Tamni, I.K. *Gayatri: The Daily Religious Practice of the Hindus*. Adyar, Madras, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1974. p.12-13.

⁵ Guénon, René. *Fundamental Symbols: The Universal Language of Sacred Science*. Cambridge, UK: Quinta Essentia, 1995. p.168 (footnote).

⁶ Masonic Ritual.

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They are naturally symbolic of each other, because they both symbolize the same truth. In the Masonic tradition, the circle with a point in the center is bordered by two parallel lines, which Masons are taught refer to the two Saint Johns.

René Guénon states:

In relation to the two Saint Johns and their solstitial symbolism, it is of interest to consider a symbol which seems peculiar to Masonry in the Anglo-Saxon world, or which at least has only been preserved in that Masonry. This is a circle with a point in the centre, placed between two parallel tangents; and these tangents are said to represent the two Saint Johns. In fact, the circle is here the annual cycle, and its solar significance is made more evident by the presence of the central point, for this same figure is also the astrological sign of the sun. The two parallel lines are tangents of the circle at the solstitial points, which they thus define as 'limit points', these points being in fact bounds beyond which the sun can never pass in this course of its journey. It is because the lines thus correspond to the two solstices that they can also be said to represent precisely the two Saint Johns.⁷

The two parallel lines are not depicted as horizontal, but rather as vertical. This suggests the ascending and descending of the Divine, as also elaborated in Jacob's Ladder, when the angels ascend and descend from Heaven to Earth. "In Christianity the feasts of the two Saint Johns are directly related to the two solstices,"⁸ which are when the Sun has risen or fallen to its most extreme location at its meridian height, "which is the glory and beauty of the day."⁹ Interestingly, the name John itself has a double meaning in Hebrew. "The name *Jahanan* in Hebrew can mean both 'mercy of God' and also 'praise to God'. "¹⁰ The 'mercy of God' refers well to St. John the Baptist who baptized Jesus, and 'praise to God' refers to St. John the Evangelist, whose Gospel writings praise God. Interestingly, "it can be said that mercy is obviously descending and that praise is ascending, which brings us again to their correlation with the two halves of the annual [solstice] cycle,"¹¹ and to the ascending and descending nature of the Divine as also represented in Jacob's Ladder.¹²

The Sun ascends and descends each day, rising in the East and setting in the West. The Master Mason in search of what was lost is traveling from the West to the East, the opposite direction. The Sun, which symbolizes the Supreme Knowledge, descends, or rather travels westward, while the Master Mason strives to travel eastwards towards the rising Sun. In the words of the Prophet: "Take one step towards God, and he will take ten steps toward you."¹³

⁷ Guénon, René. *Fundamental Symbols: The Universal Language of Sacred Science*. Cambridge, UK: Quinta Essentia, 1995. p.170.

⁸ Ibid. p.169.

⁹ Masonic Ritual.

¹⁰ Guénon, René. *Fundamental Symbols: The Universal Language of Sacred Science*. Cambridge, UK: Quinta Essentia, 1995. p.169.

¹¹ Ibid. p.169-170.

¹² It is also worth noting that on one level the two parallel lines represent the sun and the moon, as well as the two pillars that must be passed before entering the Middle Chamber of King Solomon's Temple.

¹³ Hadith Qudsi.

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The Sun's location each day rises and falls, but throughout the entire year the Sun also, at its meridian height, rises and falls, where the solstices represent the highest and lowest location in the sky as well as the shortest and longest days of the year. The darkest day in December thus represents the day the Sun begins to rise, and the day Masons must work their greatest effort. Yet, the most important day for Masons, St. John's Day in June, is associated with the summer solstice and is the day the Divine offers the most assistance and mercy. The summer solstice is associated with the longest duration of daylight and the Sun at its meridian height is at the highest location in the sky of any day of the year.

In Masonic symbolism, there are additional references to rising and falling. During the third degree, the candidate first falls, but then the body is raised. During opening and closing rituals, when the Master raps his gavel once, the deacons rise. When he raps it twice, the elected officers rise. When he raps it three times all brethren rise. During initiation, the candidate in his circumambulation is purified by raps of the gavel at the Wardens' and Master's stations. The three raps of the Master to raise the whole Lodge then may allude to these three raps at initiation. What is most interesting is the Lodge's response when the Master raps three times – the Lodge rises. Standing in this sense alludes to spiritual ascent. What is also relevant is that the Master's three raps, which raise all members physically as they stand up, also, at a much more subtle level, spiritually elevates all the brethren. This is one of many reasons why attendance is important not just for the functionality of the lodge, but for the participant's spiritual growth. Rituals as well as symbols, when affiliated with an authentic Tradition, are imbued with spiritual power or energy.

The three knocks to raise the lodge verses the one knock to seat the lodge show a peculiar three to one ratio. It takes only one knock to fall, but three to rise. One aspect of this could be that standing corresponds to God descending, and he descends at a rate of three to one. Another interpretation is that the three to one ratio demonstrates how easy it is to fall, and how difficult it is to ascend. It takes three raps of the gavel to ascend, which is the breaking off of the rough edges to fit each Mason as a living stone "for that spiritual building, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."¹⁴ It takes only one knock to fall, and thus vigilance is essential. Everything in life is spiritual work, and the single rap refers to the difficulty of the spiritual journey, which has been called as "narrow as the edge of a razor"¹⁵ in the Upanishads, or as difficult as going through "the eye of a needle"¹⁶ in Christianity.

Another representation of the Sun in Masonic rituals is in the relationship between the Worshipful Master and the Senior Warden – the former in the East and the latter in the West. The East, as already mentioned, represents the inner world and the West the outer world. The Sun sets in the outer world but rises in the inner world. To revert to what was said previously, the Junior Warden, equally between the Worshipful Master and the

¹⁴ Masonic Ritual.

¹⁵ "Katha Upanishad." (Part 3, Verse 14). *The Upanishads*. London, UK: Penguin Books, 1965. p.61. "Awake, arise! Strive for the Highest, and be in the Light! Sages say the path is narrow and difficult to tread, narrow as the edge of a razor."

¹⁶ Mark 10:25, King James Version Bible.

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Senior Warden, is the balance of the two – Strength in the outer world; Wisdom in the inner world; and the balance of the two is Beauty.

There are also peculiar differences between each of these stations during the opening and closing rituals. The Junior Warden "stands" in the South and the Worshipful Master "rises" in the East, yet the Senior Warden simply "is" in the West. The Master ascends toward Heaven while the Junior Warden stands as a beacon, not rising nor falling, showing how the Sun at its highest stands at the center of the day as the metaphysical Sun is at the center of everything. In the West, the Senior Warden simply "is," not specifically standing or rising. Manifestation in this sense, being or existing, simply is. "To be, or not to be, that is the question," as Hamlet mused. God said unto Moses, "I AM THAT I AM."¹⁷ Perhaps the three officers represent the description of the Hindu Sage's experience of Ultimate Reality as *sat-chit-ananda*, which means *being-consciousness-bliss*. The Senior Warden is being or Strength, the Worshipful Master is consciousness or Wisdom, and the Junior Warden is bliss or Beauty.

In conclusion, the Sun as a symbol of the super-luminous Light is at the center of the Masonic Tradition and is the same Light at the center of all Traditions, and is a universal symbol. The opening and closing rituals are embedded with the profundity of the Sun, as are the numerous Masonic lectures. Masonic Rites direct the Mason to see everywhere the glory and beauty of the day, and as such, the Sun as a profound representation of the Eternal, found both internally and externally.

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From the Yajnavalkya Samhita

¹⁷ Exodus 3:14, King James Version Bible.

¹⁸ Tamni, I.K. *Gayatri: The Daily Religious Practice of the Hindus*. Adyar, Madras, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1974. p.92-93.