

## UPDATE ON SOLAR ACTIVITY AND OTHER CHANGES

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I have been a bit preoccupied the last few days with events around here, and the Sun has been more than a little active as well. There were something like 18 solar flares yesterday (August 18th), most of them C-class events, but five were M-class, including a M5.5-class flare, which is large. On August 18th, we had one flare that almost reached into the X-class, the strongest level of flares. For those of you interested in learning more about how these solar flares affect our inner life, you can find the free e-book "Sun Storms" here:

<http://astrologysoftware.com/books/>

The upshot is that this is a lot of solar activity for us to absorb all at once. Flares tend to speed things up and bring change. I can assure you this has been true for me personally of late. And this much change can alter the line we have casually drawn for ourselves into the future, as if.

And I have to laugh when I realize that my own poems and prose, some of which I post for others to read, also apply to me. How appropriate is that? In this case I am thinking of my line:

"Impermanence, the smelling salts of the dharma."

Sure enough, a whiff of impermanence wakes me right up. I marvel at: what in the world was I thinking and doing all the rest of the time? Perhaps we spend most of our lives in what the Buddhists call the "God Realm," a realm where we are too high to actually do any real dharma work because we just can't get serious. I might as well be smoking weed all the time, since I seem to act like I am immortal and will live forever. Does this sound familiar?

The Buddhists teach that of the six realms of beings, it is only in the Human Realm that we are able to really practice dharma. Otherwise we either are too high or too under obscurations to get much done. Well, I can tell you I feel very human lately, which is good for me. And I am indeed looking around and at least rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, if not something even more useful.

In less than a week, all things being equal, Margaret and I will be traveling to Karma Triyana Dharmachakra Monastery in the mountains above Woodstock, N.Y. for a 10-day intensive retreat with our teacher the Ven. Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche. This is the 24th year in a row that we have attended this particular 10-day teaching on Mahamudra meditation (and have driven this 1600 mile, round-trip), which is like driving around the equator of the Earth one-and-one-half times. Over the years, we have spent about eight months in Woodstock attending this one Mahamudra teaching.

As you can imagine, I am looking forward to this trip and to be in the presence of Rinpoche, our dharma teacher for the last almost 30 years. And with my recent health blip, this time is even more precious than usual. It is a long drive and we do it in one day, so I am gearing up for that. My wife Margaret often drives this alone, so she can take over should I get tired.

There you have a brief update on activities, solar and otherwise. Of course I am busy putting my Humpty-Dumpty self back together again and foolishly trying to plot the line of my future.