



THE SACRED FOR HUMAN SURVIVAL

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Abstract:

Indigenous communities all over the world have nurtured trans-generationally, homological values, based on a non-destructive covenant with nature and a sense of non-dual identity, underlying casual variations in natural forms, created in the stress of evolution. A section of humanity is pursuing a suicidal course of creating cognitive divides between nature and culture and destroying the diversity, harmony and solidarity of natural forms, in exclusive, parochial interests of self aggrandizement. Sciences dealing with internal and external nature endorse the universal community perception acknowledging an affective, non-dual presence, both immanent and transcendent, animating interdependent patterns of natural relationships, replete with creative yearning and zest. It is necessary to unite communities across the world, for correcting the cognitive solipsism of a few, arresting their unscientific, destructive mission, and restoring the sacred concord of humanity with nature, based on coexistence rather than co-annihilation.

Keywords: interdependence, coexistence, tribal vision, creativity, diversity, harmony, solidarity, union.

Resumen:

Las comunidades indígenas de todo el mundo han cultivado valores transgeneracionales y homológicos basados en un pacto no destructivo con la naturaleza y un sentido de identidad no dual, variaciones casuales subyacentes en las formas naturales, creadas en el estrés de la evolución. Un sector de la humanidad está persiguiendo un curso suicida, creando divisiones cognitivas entre la naturaleza y la cultura destruyendo la diversidad, la armonía y la solidaridad de las formas naturales, con exclusivos intereses parroquiales de engrandecimiento personal. Las ciencias que se ocupan de la naturaleza interna y externa respaldan la percepción universal de la comunidad, reconociendo una presencia afectiva, no dual, tanto immanente como trascendente, animando patrones interdependientes de relaciones naturales, repletas de anhelo creativo y entusiasmo. Es necesario unir a las comunidades de todo el mundo para corregir el solipsismo cognitivo de unos pocos, detener su misión no científica y destructiva para restaurar la sagrada concordancia de la humanidad con la naturaleza, basada en la coexistencia en lugar de la co-aniquilación.

Palabras clave: interdependencia, coexistencia, visión tribal, creatividad, diversidad, armonía, solidaridad, unión.

Civilizational crisis: Nemesis for Hubris

A recovery of the sacred has become a paramount concern in recent decades in the wake of accelerated globalization, in which all sacred and ecological categories have been reduced to economic and production categories. Technocratic consciousness is embraced as the new ideology. It treats human relations as objectifiable. It permits expansion of capital into primary, secondary, tertiary industries. A virtual society of spectacle, driven by consciousness industry, has replaced the real world, giving rise to an artless, loveless, pitiless generation, bombarding society with signals of sex, violence and consumerism. Budget is balanced but life is unbalanced. Growth is quantitative rather than qualitative. Rationality in means irrationality in aims is the norm. Human being has become the biggest predator on earth. Having preyed on every species, he has started preying on himself. The fraying web of life, consequent on human invasion of planetary eco systems, is evident in degradation of irreplaceable goods and services that make the earth a friendly oasis in an apparently lonely universe. Instead of treating natural resources as an inaccessible trust fund to be harvested with care, hu-

man beings have converted these into a currency of high immediate value. Complexity, diversity, co-evolutionary interdependence of organic and inorganic communities were sustained earlier in homeostatic balance. These have been given up for radical simplification and homogenization of seeds, trees, organisms and mind. Productive use value in the market has been placed above consumptive use values. Unequal exchange of knowledge and resources between gene rich and capital rich regions has resulted in growth without equity, commerce and politics without morality. Collective community right to ideas and expressions has been supplanted by individual title, enclosing intellectual and natural commons. Transgenic bio cultural monocrops, subject to pathogens, divorced from biomedical, psychosocial traditions, have invaded the world, to the neglect of safety protocols. Humanity is changing its environment faster than it can adapt to the change biologically, assess it economically or politically or manage it scientifically. It has put itself in the cockpit of a flying jet with a truck driver's license. Rising pollution, strife, global warming characterize a borderless world. Mass extinction has been hastened. This threatens to consume the human race without a comet shower, nuclear or geological cataclysm¹.

Antidote: Cognitive Reorientation

This denouement has come about with a section of humanity making increasing use of nature instead of holding it sacred and seeing itself as weaver rather than part of the web. It treats itself as subject of history, armed with telos to understand by objectifying, fragmenting and reconstituting existence and nature. It marginalizes hinterland communities, original authors and custodians of the marks (*graphein*) of human identities and deprives them of authority. Having proposed to live by reason, it abdicates signs, symbols, rituals, languages, names, knowledge categories, codes of social exchange, nexus of debts and rights, rooted earlier in a dynamic, protean conversation with society or nature. Its memory and speech are frozen in amnesia and aphasia, a void of signifiers (*mise en abyme*). Sacred symbols, legible earlier, are occulted with time and confused with signs, while signs are confused with witty artifices². Humanity can arrest this trend when it merges the duality of knowing subjects and known objects

1 Bio cultural reductionism and extinction are concomitants of a materialist philosophy in which stars are transient coagulations of haphazard nebulae; life is a colloidal accident; man is a compound of chemicals, destined to disintegrate and disappear; the creative ecstasy of art, gentle wisdom of sage and willing martyrdom of saints are only bright incidents in the protoplasmic pullulation of the earth. Will Durant. 1966. *The Pleasures of Philosophy*. Simon & Schuster. New York: 13-14. Matter is considered a hump in space time, mush of electricity, wave of probability, undulating into nothingness, a mere projection of perceivers' consciousness. C.E.M. Joad. 1943. *Guide to Modern Thought*, Pan Books, London: 19. The gigantic fallacy of Western philosophy and morality is the transformation of facts into essences, historical into metaphysical conditions. Herbert Marcuse discussing Nietzsche. 1952. *Eros and Civilization*. New York. Vintage Books: 109. The idea of humanity's supremacy over nature has been reviewed after its displacement as purpose or center of the Universe by Copernicus, its location by Darwin as a member in animal kingdom and devaluation of its ego by Freud as not even master in its own house. Norman O. Brown. 1959. *Life Against Death*. Random House: 16-17. Humanity would do well to rise above the obsolete materialist view of nature, of which it is the self proclaimed master.

2 W.J.T. Mitchell. 1986. *Iconology*. University of Chicago Press: 5-6, 16-18, 29-32.

in the hermeneutic of the global we. It has to go beyond the exclusive western concept of knowing which does not allow non western cultures to exist in their in appropriable otherness; Christian eschatological concept of believing, posing an unbelieving other; European enlightenment idea of human progress as a secular utopia; Hegel's identification of secular history of the West as a sacred history of the progressive self realization of God, spirit or reason; Marxist notion of material progress and historical materialism; Freudian venture of enlarging self knowledge; Cartesian or Leibnizian notion of the human subject as Ego Cogito or Monad³.

Beginnings of human history have been dismissed by this benighted part of humanity as primitive, clumsy and superseded in its self assumed telos of knowledge and progress. It treats the rest of humanity as outside history, whose spirit is in oscillation and fermentation not reconciliation and identity, subject to biological stimuli, automatism, free association, ideational mimetics, paranormal hypnosis. It shows the so-called ahistorical people as dreaming, yet to awaken into understanding, trying impossibly to incarnate spirit in matter and give the infinite finite forms⁴. It characterizes the people it marginalizes as irrational and unnatural, full of daemonic ambiguity and barrenness, who are unable to fructify grains of cognitive logos seeds in their own soil. These grains bear flower and fruit only after being transplanted to a soil fertilized by Judeo Christian and Greco Roman rationalism and naturalism. Humanity is then rescued from the heathen context of an inadequate symbolism, a sterile repetition of mythical shapes, fanciful words and magical rituals, which forces nature and humanity to assume each other's forms, produces material relations among human beings and social relations among grotesque images and ceremonials⁵.

It is possible to recover a psychology of the sacred from such misunderstanding when we treat the distinction of subject object, knower, known and knowledge as fictitious, nescient and re inaugurate beginnings as mighty, uncanny. We can then read these beginnings forward into the future, go out to others to come back to our own selves, fulfill self understanding by understanding others and perceive the universal essence of all arts, religions, cultures and life ways practices⁶. We then stop seeing Universe as void of personality and humanity as competent to construct itself and society by deliberate design. We combine monotheism of reason with polytheism of imagination; dissolve the sharp dividing line drawn by Comte between theoretical, historical and mythical consciousness; rediscover place of mythology

3 J.L. Mehta. 1985. *India and the West. The Problem of Understanding*. Harvard University: Center for the Study of World Religions; 1999. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason, Towards a History of the Vanishing Present*. Harvard University Press.

4 Ibid. Mehta discusses Hegel's views in 'Inter-cultural Understanding': 118-20 and 'Will to Interpret': 186-7.

5 Ibid. Mehta discusses the views of Paul Hacker on *chresis* and *usus Justus* or 'discriminative utilization in 'Will to Interpret': 183-4.

6 Ibid. Mehta explains hermeneutics of intercultural understanding in 'Understanding and Tradition': 129-32; 19.

in the history of philosophy⁷; and trace the analogical, conventional and existential connections among icon, symbol and index⁸.

Synthesis: Towards Rectification of Consciousness

Once we reorganize our cognitive approach, we discover the inter permeability and layering of forms and their connection with content⁹. We recover the lost alphabet of the polysemous tradition of the sacred, from differentially plural linguistic kinships and affiliations, by posing the same question in different ways, and, by enlarging or miniaturizing the typography. We undertake a palingenesis, for resurrecting the *disjecta membra* of a symbolic universe as an *organon* of self knowledge. We combine *poiesis* and *techne*, onomatopoeic and interjectional, analytical and synthetic approaches to liberate un thought from the thought. We give up a fragmenting, cognitive approach for disengaging our consciousness from being scattered in simulacra. We understand by self naughting, not by a euhemeristic enterprise to understand the person living the tradition better than he understands it himself¹⁰. Form and content fuse in the sacred, through a mind, rid of preconceptions, which sees traditions as symbolic rehearsal, validation, consummation, continuation of natural phenomena for well being, and not a trivial etiology of narration, reiteration or entertainment¹¹.

We discard cognitive dichotomies and appreciate, through intuitive, holistic understanding, the principle of fulfillment of the best and finest in human nature. We see, in indigenous traditions, a convergence of immanence transcendence, emanation resolution, identity difference, being becoming, iconic an iconic, sacred profane, sensual spiritual, *via affirmativa* and *via negativa*. Seen as theophany, the universe reveals itself as sympathetic not indifferent to humanity. Beings flit in and out like swallows in a barn. Every form turns into every other in an intransigent flux. All forms get fused with a single breath, tension and feeling. An overwhelming sense is conveyed of a singular essence, becoming multiform, to lapse back into pristine unity. The teeming world of sensations disappears like ephemeral

7 Ernst Cassirer. 1955. *The Philosophy of Symbolic Form*. Yale University Press: XIII-XVII.

8 C.S. Peirce. 1939-58. *Collected Papers*. 1967. Hartshorne and Weiss. Harvard University Press.

9 See Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty. 1976. *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*. Delhi. Motilal Banarsidass: 375-77. She explains how myths rearrange vivid episodes like bits of colored glass in a kaleidoscope through which one can see one's personal history. Also Roland Barthes. 1986. *Mythology Today*. Trans., New York. Hill and Wang: 90-91. Barthes describes the layering of traditions as neither melodic nor harmonic, but contrapuntal, mingling voices in a volume, not in a line.

10 Paul Valery elucidates this. 1946. 'What I see blinds me, what I hear makes me deaf, what I know makes me unknowing, knowledge is a cloud, obscuring the truth'. *Monsieur Teste*, Nouvelle Edition, Paris: 60-61. We may, with unclouded vision and attuned hearing, breach walls, mantled by ivy, moss and wild flowers of a thousand tender and sacred associations, and hear, even in the stormiest weather, the distant chiming of church bells of Rome, by the lake of Nemi. James George Frazer. 1890/1959. *The New Golden Bough*. New York: The New American Public Library: XXVI-VII.

11 Ernst Cassirer. 1944. *An Essay on Man*. Yale University: 80-2; 1949; *Philosophy in a New Key*. Evanston: 308, 387-400.

oceanic waves. The numinous presence animating it flashes in the mind of the *homini religiosi* in a sudden illumination and catharsis¹².

Figures of speech and thought are not mutually exclusive in the tradition of the sacred. It is fragmented by time, space and diverse retellings. Simultaneity, ambiguity and polyvalence characterize its expressions. We perceive it as a shared discourse when we give up an exclusive Hegelian emphasis on idea or Kantian emphasis on form. Diverse articulations of the sacred are like parallel or remote echoes in a cognate language. Primary signals, close to its initial commotion, are distorted in successive transmissions. The spectacle disappears once the self returns to itself after recollection of the original vision. This is *restitutio integrum*, recovery of a non dual identity on which plurality has been imposed¹³. In our cleansed perception, a cathedral or aero plane, hymn or mathematical equation appear as equally beautiful, if made according to their ideal form and practical function. Artists making these no longer seem special kind of men, every man being revealed as a special kind of artist. They work to achieve common good, not add to the sum of mortality. They take our lives from a state of wretchedness to a state of blessedness¹⁴. A thought is felt by them as immediately as the odor of a rose and the meaning of a shape flashes in their mind like a sword blade flickering in the distant light of burning towers. Like St. Martin they see notes that shine and bowers that sound.

Shared Sense of the Sacred

A sense of the sacred is not monopoly of any individual or community. It comes to those who are ready to be pierced by the steely barb of the infinite. The idea of Universe being animated by pulsations of life has been implicit in concepts of Greek *pneuma*, Sanskrit *prana*, Chinese *ch'i*. Body, mind and soul of an individual are harmonized with Universe through meditation in Japanese *zen*, Chinese *ch'an* and Sanskrit *dhyana*. Plato's *eros*, Dante's *amor*, India's *bhakti prema karuna*, love, compassion in Christ or Buddha embrace everyone from ant to angel. Indian *Yoga*, Japanese *satori*, Chinese *tao*, Sufi *tariqa, fana, dhawq* yoke phenomenal and noumenal. Cosmic Man is recognized as Christian *Adam*, Persian *Gayomart*, Hindu *Purusha*, Chinese *P'an Ku*, Hobbesian *Leviathan*. The Supreme Feminine is Gnostic *Sophia*, Greek *Pallas Athena*, Chinese Buddhist *Kwan Yin*, giving initiation, atonement, release. Interaction of masculine feminine, static kinetic, light and shadow underlie concepts of Indian *purusha prakriti*, Chinese *yang yin*, Tibetan *yab-yum*. Protective spirit and fetish in animal and tribal world have equivalents in Roman *Genius*, Egyptian *Ba-soul*, and Greek *Daimon*. Sacrifice,

12 To feel or link to some feeling: the great mass lay embedded in quickening soul and all that I beheld, respired with inward meaning. Wordsworth. *Prelude* III: 127.

13 C. G. Jung discusses the Christian concept of restoration of original human condition of union with God, an *apocatastasis*, through *anamnesis*, recollection . 1958. *Psyche and Symbol*. New York. Doubleday Anchor: 38.

14 A.K.Coomaraswamy. 1956. Provides perspectives of *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art* to define true art and artist. New York. Dover Publications.

sacrificed, sacrificer are assimilated in Christianity and Buddhism. Eucharistic Transubstantiation is no mere partaking of bread and wine but participation and communion. *Maradharsana* is no external conflict between Mara and Buddha but involution of Buddha's consciousness. Mara personifying destructive passions is the other face of Buddha the enlightened. Buddha is Mara transfigured. He ascends from the ground to the summit of his contingent being. Ibn Al Arabi's heart is a pasture for gazelles, convent for Christian monks, temple for idols, *Ka'ba* for pilgrims, *Torah Table* and the book of *Quran*. He follows the religion of love, wherever its camels take him¹⁵.

An initial concentration, followed by an expansion of consciousness, is hallmark of a sense of sacred. Man is an infinite circle whose circumference is everywhere, centre in one place. God is an infinite circle whose circumference is nowhere, centre everywhere. Man becomes God if he multiplies infinitely his center of consciousness. In India, on this principle, the temple is equated with the body and house of God and Universe with which the worshipper identifies himself. Music is equated with temple in its ascent and descent, from the tonic heart of silence through microtonal intervals to a crescendo of sound. Indian dancer moves in a circle, exploring it axially, vertically, horizontally, obliquely, spirally, searching for the moment of the most dynamic and rapturous balance. Attempt is not to imitate nature but its patterns, in a Universe of ever widening circles of hurtling galaxies, centered in gravitational balance. This approach is like that of St. Thomas Aquinas, who speaks of imitating nature in its manner of operation, to find which, in Meister Eckhart's words, all its forms must be shattered. The objective is an assimilation of fragmented human prototypes with the integrated divine archetype¹⁶.

A sense of solidarity of forms, natural and supernatural, is dormant in indigenous perceptions like Polynesian *Mana*, Iroquois *Lorinda*, North American Sioux *Wakanda*, Australian *Churinga*, Algonquian Canadian *Manitu*, Asian *Arborvitae*¹⁷. Communities have preserved harmony of mental and physical habitats with environment by nurturing a diversity of narratives and scripts against essentializing master narratives. Cree Canadians have developed the concept of *Pimatisiwin*, good life, *Wakotawin*, to work for all, and see humanity as interconnected. The South African Khoisan concept of *Ubuntu* has provided foundation for spiritual healing, renewal and reconciliation. The South African novelist Zakes Mda has discovered Bushman rock art designs, made in healing trance dance, in patterns of waters, lichen, leaves, cracks in mud, strewn over the grassland in which they live, die and are buried. Aymaras in

15 Carl G. Jung. 1971. *Man and His Symbols*. Dell Publishing. New York: 150, 162, 211 and 213; Will Durant. 1966. *Pleasures of Philosophy*. New York. Simon and Schuster: 38; For Arabi, R.A. Nicholson. 1914. *Mystics of Islam*. London. Routledge: 105.

16 Kalyan Kumar Chakravarty. 2012. Ed. *Vishvavara*. Introduction. Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan and Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts: 4-16.

17 Ernest Cassirer. *The Philosophy of Symbolic Form*: 95-6; Suzanne K. Langer. 1979. *Philosophy in a New Key*. 144-70.

highland Bolivia use the Anata Andina carnival parade to invoke Pachama, Mother Earth for human nonhuman reciprocity. The Mexican Bushlore calendar is based on springs, lagoons, creative nodes along watersheds. New Zealand Maoris act as *Kaitaki*, custodians, of *Taonga*, treasures of Mother Earth. Chola Naicken in Wayanad Kerala compare pregnancy of a girl with stages in development of banana leaves. All temple cities, landscapes, rivers, water harvesting structures and forest groves in India are seen as sanctified by creation procreation myths. All life ways rites are conceived as sacramental contracts between human and divine families. Vedic literature celebrates elements of nature as *dramatis personae* in the theater of Universe. Karioca and Matatua Declarations of the Indigenous People 1992, 1993, Brazil and New Zealand demand reversal of culturally based harm, custodial rights for dreaming, burial ceremonial sites and environmental self determination. Multi vocal, polyphonic at conscious, critical level, sacred traditions constitute a single serial structure with defined boundaries, on an inspirational intuitive level, dedicated to nature culture harmony, beings Being mutuality¹⁸.

Quest for Sacred: A Post Scientific enture

The psychology of the sacred is rooted in pre conceptual and post scientific thinking. It harks back to the cognitive beginnings of humanity and addresses its future survival. Alongside quantum physics, electro dynamics, non linear mathematics and fluid mechanics, it looks at matter and energy as inter penetrated; Universe as a web of relations, opposites as complementary, wholes and parts as mutually determined and objects as processes in a universal flux. It regards the world as a self regulating biological *holon*, in which hidden worlds connect to things that hide them, tide pools connect with unfathomable seas, which connect with our chromosomes¹⁹.

Psychoanalytic theories of human consciousness speak about curing the emerging democracy of the sick, the hospital succeeding the church and Parliament as archetypical institutions. They relate the organism in gestalt therapy to its environment like an osmotic membrane of a plant²⁰. It is felt that the destructiveness of a technological civilization and its mental impoverishment negate validity of Freud's identification of civilizational progress with repression. The solution is found in Freud's suggestion to correct a neurasthenic civilization through an oceanic feeling of oneness with the world in the manner of St. Francis of Assisi. Alternative has been

18 Kalyan Kumar Chakravarty. 2011. Introduction, *Voice and Memory*. Delhi. Orient Blackswan; 2014. Introduction, *Knowing Differently*. Ed, Devy, Davies and Chakravarty. London . Routledge.

19 Roger Rosenblatt. May 2000: *Time*. Space time theory of Mathematical Physics sees life as singular in essence, variously interactive in manifestations, in a web of relations. A.N.Whitehead. 1960. *Adventures of Ideas*. New York. Mentor: 134-38, 153-55, 160-63. In linguistics, quality state, noun verb, omnipresent localized, continuity dispersion are co-existent. Jacques Derrida. 1978. *Writing and Difference*. Trans., Paris: Seuil: 26-28, 280-86, 292-3.

20 Philip Rieff. 1959. *The Mind of the Moralists*. Viking Press: 153-4; F.S. Perls, R.F. Hefferline, P. Goodman. 1951. *Gestalt Therapy*. New York. Julian Press: 259.

sought to his suggestion for attaining independence from the external world through sublimation of internal psychical libidinal components. It has been found in a non repressive sublimation without desexualisation, through a genitofugal, polymorphous, nonaggressive eroticization of the organism and its relation with environment. The way of liberating individual ego from tyranny of the market, public opinion, common nonsense and machine has been located in a spontaneous irradiation of its entire sensory field in relation to nature, through a life in the present tense, play (latin, *ludere*), free from social conditioning and neurotic regressive repetition compulsions²¹.

Psychology of the sacred looks at humanity as an unfinished, transitional, suicidal species which is yet capable of extricating itself from the fatal web created by its malignant necrophilia. It prompts humanity to overcome chasm with nature; exorcise nihilism, the uncanniest guest standing at its doorstep; banish moral and spiritual homelessness; work with elements in phenomenal world, in fidelity to the idea of good, law and regularity rather than capricious, aleatory interests, and regenerate nutritive, therapeutic forces. It believes that humanity can cultivate life against death by drawing on and shoring up its own traditions of sustenance of its organic and inorganic environment. It would speak after John Donne: "No one is an island, but part of the main. Everyone's death diminishes me. If a clod is washed away from Peru, India is less. Do not ask for whom the bell tolls. The bell tolls for thee"²².



21 Sigmund Freud. 1961. *Civilization and its Discontents*. New York. W.W. Norton: 6, 29, 43, 54, 101-2. Biddle points out that Freud's quarrel is not with religion but with religious dogma. W. Earl Biddle. 1962. *Integration of Religion and Psychiatry*. Collier, New York: 97-8. Watts describes how Indian Buddhist *sahaja*, *Tao wu wei*, noninterference, *Levy Bruhl's participation mystique*, Orpheus's liberative art, drawing others into vortex, can end tension of id ego, rider horse, *umwelt*, *mitwelt*, *eigenwelt*, biology, society, consciousness, posed by Freud. Man, described by Freud as a prosthetic God with artificial adjuncts, can then move from a social, Confucian, to a Taoist natural order. Alan W. Watts. 1970. *Psychotherapy East and West*. Valentine Books, New York: 21-25, 120-1, 131, 213. Marcuse says that libidinal cathexis of ego, one's own body, can become source and reservoir for a new libidinal cathexis of the objective world, transforming it into a new mode of being. He draws on Freud to take him forward. Herbert Marcuse. 1955. *Eros and Civilization*. Beacon Press, Boston: 160, 181-2.

22 Erich Fromm. 1947. *Man for Himself*. Connecticut, Fawcett Premier: 246-51; *Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. 1975. Fawcett Crest: 462-5, 483; John Donne, *Meditation XVII*, adapted; J.L.Mehta. 1976. *Martin Heidegger, The Way and the Vision*: 208-9,318-19.