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Indigenous Religious Practices and Their Ecologies

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"I greet you oh forest so that I can walk among you."
— Old Cherokee Saying—before entering the forests

Indigenous Wisdom and Ways of Knowing

An old grandmother from a remote Indigenous community once told me that her granddaughter had gone to the university in the big city for six years to "learn about things that our people have known from the beginning of time." She explained to me that "the world is very simple; we make it complicated." She said that "the owner of the mountains lives inside of you. It speaks with sacred words to all living beings. The foreigner needs to possess the earth, thus destroying it and making us homeless." For the Indigenous person, there is no distinction between the spiritual and the non-spiritual. There is no difference between the religious and the profane.

There are certain scepticisms surrounding the notion of Indigenous knowledge systems. Resource management professionals have always been suspicious about claims of "native wisdom" in the use of natural resources. Cases have shown evidence from different groups of hunters that foragers tend to maximize their short-term harvests and that apparent resource management is merely an artifact of optimal foraging strategies (Alvard 1993). Indigenous peoples may have a profound knowledge of their environment, yet it does not follow that they use this knowledge for a conscious conservation of their resources.

Indigenous knowledge systems are defined as knowledge held by Indigenous peoples, or local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. This is different than western resource management systems which are designed scientifically to lock out feedback from the environment and to avoid natural agitations. An Indigenous

person would look at nature and observe its vibrancy and meaning as well as regard it with awe and uncertainty, while a knowledge, different ways of understanding, perceiving, experiencing, in sum, of defining reality, which includes the notions of one's relationship not only to the social milieu but also to the natural environment.

Both camps seem to have different views on one another. The Western view on Indigenous systems is that they usually see Indigenous peoples not as a source of solutions, instead, they often see Indigenous peoples as themselves being the source of the problem. The Indigenous peoples incorporate the 'hunted' into their act of hunting and fishing. In Western management systems there is no room for reciprocity between the hunter and hunted. Indigenous peoples understand the importance of their local knowledge. Even with all their differences and disbeliefs, there has been a growth of interest in Indigenous knowledge systems in recent years. It is due in large part, to the failures of conventional resource management science, since, even with all of its modern managerial 'powers,' it is unable to halt or reverse the depletion of resources.

Vedic Views on Nature and Environmental Ethics

In the sacred texts of Hinduism and the compositions for environmental protection teaching, the Vedas occupy a very important place as the colossal tractate on ecological conservation and protection, displaying a healthy Human-Nature relationship. The Vedic sages or rishis discern the grandeur and glory of the blazing sun, fervent thunderlight, tributary rippling down the crags, red fire flames, monsoon rain, cyclones, cloudy sky, and windy air sanctioning sanctity to Nature. The depiction of trees, plants, water, mountains, and sky holds an elevated place in the ancient texts of India.

The Vedic belief that God is everywhere in every particle prevents humanity from harming the environment. The strict orthodox Hindu belief summons the Vedas as "*apaurusheya*," 'not human', teachings directed by the Supreme Power. Teachings to follow the environmental preservation path paved by the Vedas protect the environment. The ancient sages deify Nature as an expression of God with Vedas as the pursuit of unfathomed and infinite, tome of super and supra compunction. The learning commences with Vedas and ends with it. Enunciating the gratitude towards the forest wealth, the sages in Atharvaveda praise the anti-inflammatory medicines as divine power, which helps them cure the entire creatures. Mother earth in Atharvaveda is the mother of remedies, but unfortunately, the current scenario visualizes the lack of treatments for infinite cutting of trees.

As per the Vedic scholars, everyone must know the properties and importance of various drugs and the nutritional value of trees and the plant kingdom to benefit humankind and conserve the plants. In Atharvaveda, the purpose of gratitude towards the forest wealth indicates the importance of medicinal properties for saving human life. The Vedic rishis suggest receiving virtue and the importance of medicinal plants and nurturing trees so that flora and fauna can be preserved by benefitting from their properties. The Vedic rishis considered the faunas as their children. The protection of vegetation for humanity is paramount, and Vedas suggest having a sense of dedication and

commitment to its conservation. The indiscriminate cutting of trees decreases the pure air and oxygen, indicating trees' protection, preservation, and plantation. In this connection, Vedas suggest planting more and more trees, for a single tree equals ten sons in happiness and prosperity; the compassion and harmony for water and air nurture the concept of environmental protection.

Indigenous Practices of Ecological Sustainability

While the caste Hindus have scriptures to guide them and give them definite pathways to protect their environment, the Indigenous peoples by the very nature of their lifestyle, acknowledge and contribute to the idea of ecological sustainability. Right from their ritualistic practices to their day-to-day living, they contribute to the sustenance of the planet. It would be interesting to note here that in most Indigenous languages as far as I know, there is no word for 'Waste'. To me this is significant because for the Indigenous peoples there is nothing that should be wasted. They are known to consume much less water per person than any other community in India. They regenerate the forest and worship the trees and the forests, the rivers and the rocks and the hills and the mountains—Nature in all its manifestations.

The forest and the hills and the land around them are not external to them. They are the forest, they are the mountains, they are the land. In worshipping the environment they worship themselves and therefore they will never destroy it. This is in stark contrast to the rules defined in the Vedic traditions. Both groups appear to perceive and engage with the world in fundamentally different ways. Indigenous communities tend to exhibit a deeper environmental awareness than we, the urban and formally educated, typically do. While their understanding arises from lived experience and direct interaction, ours is often shaped by externally imposed frameworks and taught prescriptions. In other words, we are *"taught"* the *"word"* whereas the person from the Indigenous community *"learns"* the *"world"* autonomously. This means that we learn only the *"container—the package"* whereas the Indigenous person learns the *"content"*. We have divided the world around us into *"natural"* and *"un-natural"*. For example it is argued that drawing is a cognitive activity for children, and the adult conditioning that suppresses children's natural behaviour and intelligence is unnatural.

Fossil Identities and Dialogue with the Past

Jacques Monod, in his *Chance and Necessity* (1970), says:

> Modern man is the product of that evolutionary symbiosis, and by any other hypothesis incomprehensible, indecipherable. Every living being is also a fossil. Within it, all the way down to the microscopic structure of its proteins, it bears the traces if not the stigmata of its ancestry. This is even truer of man than of any other animal species, because of the dual evolution—physical and ideational—to which s/he is heir.

We live in a world in which we have polarized the so-called savage mind and the so-called civilized mind. Wilson Harris, the Guayanese novelist-critic, believes that we are in fact much closer to the savage mind than we think or would like to admit. He says, "Only a dialogue with the past can produce originality" (1967). This seems to echo Jacques Monod's view that each living person is a fossil in so far as each individual carries within themself remnants of deep-seated antecedents. The past plays tricks on us and conditions our present responses. Floating around in the psyche of each one of us are all the fossil identities. By entering into a fruitful dialogue with the past we become able to revive the fossils that are buried within ourselves. An awareness of the ambivalence of fossils enables the tribal communities to visualize new possibilities and construct a new scale along which they can attempt to progress. The past is thus projected into the substance of the future.

Therefore, for most traditional tribal communities, terms like *"Progress"* and *"Development"* are non-creative and disconnect from their present and thus should be avoided.

Spirituality and the Foundations of Religion

One of the sources of these contradictory claims is the way we understand religion. So the first task is to think about religion itself, the relation between religion and being. This is something Gandhi called "religion of religions," the core of religion, the base on which the superstructure of religion stands. The essence of religion is "spirituality," which is as integral to humans as sexuality. We are essentially spiritual beings. Let me unpack this idea of spirituality in terms of its meaning and consequences. We can understand it through the idea of Purushartha, which is one of the core ideas of Indian Intellectual Traditions, which has a universal appeal. I would invite you to think of Purushartha as constituting elements of human species-being. According to this theory, four core elements constitute humans: a) Our relation/dependence on nature (Artha), which compels us to develop means to appropriate resources for our survival and institutions to arrange them; b) Our biological being and the desires produced by it (Kama), around which we create institutions like marriage and social relations; c) Our curiosity about exploring the laws of nature, around this we create knowledge system and based on which we also create social norms; and d) Being conscious of consciousness or our capacity of abstraction (Moksha), which enables us to think beyond time and space, helping us in comprehending the "being-in-itself" and "being-in-the world"—it is this dimension of our being that we can call "spiritualism," around which we create the first layer of the institutions of religion.

As a spiritual being, we enjoy being spiritual and developing techniques for the same, which could be called the "technology of the self," or "accessing the self." To understand this, we need to invoke another set of concepts—"Prakriti" and "Purusha." Prakriti is the realm of the outer world, and Purusha is the conscious self. We become conscious of our body, our family, our community, nation, humanity, and universe. As a conscious self, the stage of our journey defines our personhood or personality.

Interestingly this journey could be inward and outward. The former makes us mystics and the latter makes us scientists. At the final stage of consciousness, both the mystics and scientists arrive at a similar consciousness stage, which allows us to comprehend ourselves as a part of the infinite. This is the moment of enlightenment and bliss, which makes human "Sthitpragya," a state of mind that Krishna suggests in Gita and Gandhi advocates for human beings. Such a stage transforms our other three layers of being, i.e., our relationship with nature, desires emerging out of our biological being and our pursuit of knowledge.

I would like to suggest that the question of God's existence is central to only some religions. It is not one of the core ideas of religion as such. Humans are also a symbol creating beings. We make symbols through which we communicate and access abstract ideas. The Gods or Goddesses that we create are symbols of specific ideas. Religious institutions use these symbols to influence people and maintain it. Symbols help constitute communities. I will come to this point in a while.

Religion as an institution or organised religion is based on spiritualism, which is "religions of religion." It serves the "technology of the self" to realise the spiritual self and which makes religion so crucial for humans. Since there is hardly any secular spiritualism, our dependence on organised religion continues. When we speak of the decline of religion, we are primarily referring to a waning commitment to organized religious institutions. However, this does not imply a diminishing interest in spirituality. On the contrary, global trends indicate a growing attraction to spiritual practices and experiences outside formal religious structures.

Contrasting Cognitive Systems

The literate cognitive system and the Indigenous cognitive system represent distinct ways of processing information, perceiving the world, and organizing knowledge. Here are some key differences between them:

1. *Oral vs. Written Tradition:* The Indigenous cognitive system is often rooted in oral tradition, where knowledge is transmitted through storytelling, oral histories, and communal experiences. In contrast, the literate cognitive system relies heavily on written language, formal education, and the use of texts for learning and communication.
2. *Holistic vs. Analytical Thinking:* Indigenous cognitive systems tend to emphasize holistic thinking, viewing the world as interconnected and integrated. This includes holistic perspectives on nature, spirituality, community, and relationships. In contrast, the literate cognitive system often promotes analytical thinking, breaking down complex concepts into discrete components for analysis and understanding.
3. *Spatial and Temporal Orientation:* Indigenous cognitive systems often have unique spatial and temporal orientations, influenced by cultural beliefs, seasonal cycles, and geographical landscapes. This includes a deep connection

to land, ancestral knowledge of natural resources, and cyclical views of time. In contrast, the literate cognitive system tends to have a linear, chronological view of time and may prioritize abstract concepts over specific spatial orientations.

4. *Epistemological Foundations:* The epistemological foundations of Indigenous cognitive systems are often based on experiential learning, intuition, and communal wisdom passed down through generations. This includes respect for elders, traditional knowledge holders, and spiritual leaders as sources of authority. In contrast, the literate cognitive system is rooted in formalized education, empirical evidence, and the validation of knowledge through scientific methods and academic institutions.
5. *Diverse Perspectives:* Indigenous cognitive systems encompass a diversity of perspectives, beliefs, and cultural practices specific to different Indigenous communities around the world. These perspectives are shaped by unique histories, languages, and worldviews. In contrast, the literate cognitive system may promote more standardized, universalized knowledge that is accessible across different cultural contexts.

Understanding and appreciating these differences can lead to greater cross-cultural understanding, collaboration, and the integration of diverse knowledge systems in addressing complex global challenges. To fully grasp the ecological implications of these perceptual divergences, it is necessary to delve deeper into the epistemological foundations of Indigenous and Vedic traditions, their synergies, and their potential to inform contemporary environmental praxis. While Indigenous communities embody an unmediated communion with nature, the Vedic framework offers a structured cosmology that sanctifies the natural order. Exploring these systems in tandem reveals both their distinct contributions and their shared resistance to the ecological alienation of modernity.

The Dialectics of Sacred Ecologies: Indigenous and Vedic Perspectives

The interplay between Indigenous religious practices and their ecological ramifications offers a profound lens through which to examine humanity's relationship with the natural world. As articulated earlier, Indigenous communities perceive no schism between the spiritual and the material, a worldview that stands in marked contrast to the dualistic tendencies of Western epistemologies. This holistic ontology imbues their ecological practices with a reverence that transcends utilitarian concerns, positioning nature as a co-participant in the unfolding of existence rather than a resource to be subdued. The Vedic tradition, with its scriptural injunctions and cosmological grandeur, similarly sanctifies the natural order, yet it does so through a structured metaphysical framework that contrasts with the experiential immediacy of Indigenous lifeways. This section extends the analysis by exploring the dialectical tensions and

synergies between these systems, their implications for ecological sustainability, and their relevance amidst the accelerating environmental crises of the Anthropocene.

The Epistemological Underpinnings of Indigenous Ecologies

Indigenous ecological knowledge emerges not from abstract theorization but from a lived symbiosis with the environment. This knowledge, often encoded in myths, rituals, and oral traditions, reflects a dynamic reciprocity between human communities and their ecological contexts. For instance, the Cherokee invocation cited earlier—"I greet you oh forest so that I can walk among you"—is not merely a poetic flourish but a performative act of acknowledgment, signalling a relational ethic that predicates human action on mutual respect. Such practices underscore what anthropologist Tim Ingold (2000) describes as a "dwelling perspective," wherein humans are not detached observers of nature but active participants within a shared lifeworld. This contrasts sharply with the Cartesian separation of subject and object that underpins much of Western resource management, which privileges control over communion.

The scepticism surrounding Indigenous resource management, as noted with reference to Alvard's (1993) study, merits further scrutiny. While it is true that foraging strategies may prioritize short-term gains, this critique often overlooks the temporal depth of Indigenous ecological practices. These communities operate within a *longue durée* of intergenerational knowledge, wherein immediate actions are informed by a collective memory of environmental cycles and limits. The absence of a term for "waste" in many Indigenous languages, as highlighted earlier, exemplifies this ethos of total utilization, where every element of the natural world is repurposed within the community's lifecycle. This cyclical economy stands in stark opposition to the linear extractivism of industrialized societies, which generates waste as an inevitable by-product of progress.

Synergies and Divergences: A Comparative Analysis

The convergence of Indigenous and Vedic ecologies lies in their shared recognition of nature's sanctity, yet their divergences reveal distinct modalities of ecological engagement. Indigenous practices are inherently local, rooted in specific landscapes and oral traditions that adapt fluidly to environmental shifts. The Vedic tradition, by contrast, aspires to universality, its ecological ethics distilled into timeless principles applicable across contexts. This universality, however, can sometimes obscure the particularities of place, a limitation that Indigenous systems circumvent through their embeddedness in specific ecosystems.

A comparative lens reveals further nuances. For instance, the animistic worldview of many Indigenous communities parallels the Vedic concept of *prana* (life force) permeating all beings, yet the former expresses this through direct interaction—hunting, gathering, and ritual—while the latter codifies it into philosophical treatises and liturgical acts. This distinction mirrors the broader cognitive divide outlined earlier: the Indigenous *"learning the world"* versus the literate *"taught the word."* Both approaches, however, resist the commodification of nature that defines modern industrial

paradigms, offering alternative visions of ecological harmony that challenge the hegemony of technocratic solutions.

Ecological Crises and the Revival of Traditional Wisdom

The contemporary ecological crisis—marked by deforestation, climate change, and biodiversity loss—underscores the limitations of conventional resource management, as noted earlier. The failure of scientific managerialism to halt environmental degradation has catalysed a renewed interest in traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), encompassing Indigenous perspectives with vigour. TEK is increasingly recognized in global fora, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), as a vital complement to scientific approaches, offering adaptive strategies honed over millennia (Berkes 2018).

Indigenous practices, such as the rotational farming of the Karen people in Thailand or the water conservation techniques of the Warli in India, demonstrate resilience in the face of environmental stress, preserving soil fertility and water resources without reliance on industrial inputs. Similarly, Vedic principles of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *dharma* (duty) inspire movements like India's *Chipko* movement, where villagers embraced trees to prevent logging, embodying a scriptural ethic in lived action. These examples illustrate how traditional wisdom can inform sustainable practices, bridging the gap between ancient insight and modern necessity.

Gendered Dimensions of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge

While Indigenous and Vedic traditions have been studied extensively in relation to their ecological orientations, a gendered analysis reveals further nuance in understanding the moral economies of care, sustainability, and sacred interdependence. In many Indigenous communities, women play a central role in maintaining ecological knowledge, often acting as stewards of seeds, healers of communities, and guardians of sacred groves. This positionality is not incidental; it is rooted in cosmological and social frameworks that see women's roles as closely aligned with fertility, renewal, and sustainability.

Among the Khasi and Garo communities of Northeast India, for instance, matrilineal traditions often position women at the heart of decision-making processes related to land and resource distribution. Their rituals involve female-centric cosmologies that associate the Earth with maternal deities and feminine power. These practices reflect an understanding of ecology that is not only spiritual but gendered—emphasizing nurturing, continuity, and cyclical rhythms.

Similarly, in the Vedic tradition, goddesses such as Prithvi (Earth), Ganga (River), and Saraswati (Knowledge) are not just deified abstractions but symbolic expressions of a gendered sacredness that informs ecological ethics. Rituals involving the worship of rivers or forests often invoke these feminine energies, linking protection of nature with reverence for the divine feminine.

Yet, the intersection of ecology and gender also reveals systemic exclusions. In contemporary religious and social practices, the symbolic centrality of the feminine often contrasts with limited female agency in institutional structures. Therefore, a decolonial and feminist re-reading of Indigenous and Vedic ecologies is essential to recover the full spectrum of ecological wisdom and to ensure that ecofeminist insights become part of mainstream environmental discourse.

Gender-sensitive environmental governance models are beginning to emerge globally. Projects that involve women in forest management, water conservation, and seed banking have proven more resilient and sustainable. These initiatives, inspired by traditional knowledge and informed by contemporary feminist praxis, offer pathways to inclusive and effective ecological stewardship.

To understand ecology in its most comprehensive form, we must thus integrate not only Indigenous and metaphysical knowledge systems but also gendered epistemologies that foreground care, resilience, and reciprocity. In this light, the preservation of ecological balance is inseparable from the preservation of cultural memory, social justice, and gender equity.

Indigenous Medicinal Practices and Legal-Ecological Frameworks

Indigenous medicinal knowledge constitutes one of the most profound embodiments of ecological intimacy and spiritual philosophy in Indigenous cultures. These systems are not merely collections of plant-based remedies but are embedded within a sacred cosmology that respects the sentience and agency of medicinal flora. Healing is understood holistically—addressing body, mind, spirit, and community—often mediated through rituals, chants, and ecological reciprocity.

The San people of Southern Africa, for instance, have developed intricate herbal pharmacopeias that rely on centuries of empirical observation and intergenerational transmission. Similarly, the Dongria Kondh of Odisha in India maintain extensive botanical knowledge, with sacred groves functioning as reservoirs of biodiversity and sources of traditional medicine. These groves are protected not through formal legislation but through religious taboos, myths, and customary law.

This leads to the broader discourse of Indigenous legal systems, which include land tenure arrangements, resource-sharing norms, and sacred laws that govern human-nature relations. These legal frameworks are often unwritten yet robust, upheld through social memory, oral traditions, and communal consensus. In contrast to Western jurisprudence, which is adversarial and codified, Indigenous legal systems are dialogic and restorative—focused on harmony rather than retribution.

In many parts of the world, environmental jurisprudence is beginning to recognize the legitimacy of these systems. Legal pluralism, wherein customary laws coexist with statutory frameworks, is being institutionalized in countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador, and New Zealand. The legal personhood granted to the Whanganui River by the New Zealand Parliament, based on Maori cosmology, is a landmark example of integrating Indigenous ecological values into formal legal doctrine.

In India, there is increasing advocacy for recognizing tribal land rights and forest conservation practices as legitimate legal instruments. The Forest Rights Act (2006) is a partial step in this direction, although its implementation remains inconsistent. Integrating Indigenous jurisprudence more fully into national environmental policies could enhance both ecological outcomes and social justice.

The convergence of Indigenous medicinal systems with legal-ecological frameworks reveals an ontological orientation that is inherently relational, ethical, and sustainable. It challenges dominant paradigms of property, health, and justice by reimagining these categories through the lens of reciprocity and sacred interdependence. To ignore these systems is not only to marginalize alternative knowledges but to forgo vital strategies for planetary resilience and communal well-being.

Thus, a comprehensive ecological vision must incorporate Indigenous medicine and jurisprudence—not as peripheral supplements but as foundational paradigms that reconfigure how we conceive law, health, and the environment in the Anthropocene.

Toward a Syncretic Ecological Ethic

The acknowledgement of Indigenous ecologies suggests the possibility of a syncretic ethic that honors both the immediacy of lived experience and the depth of cosmological reflection. Such an ethic would reject the binary of "savage" versus "civilized" minds, as Wilson Harris and Jacques Monod propose, recognizing that all human consciousness bears traces of its evolutionary past. This synthesis aligns with Octavio Paz's vision of a "synchronic" time, where diverse temporalities and spatialities converge in a shared ecological consciousness.

Practically, this could manifest in policies that combine Indigenous land stewardship with Vedic-inspired conservation mandates, such as afforestation campaigns rooted in scriptural valorisation of trees. Philosophically, it invites a reimagining of spirituality as an ecological practice, where the "technology of the self" extends beyond personal enlightenment to encompass collective responsibility for the planet. The Purushartha framework, with its emphasis on *artha* (resource use), *kama* (biological desire), *dharma* (normative knowledge), and *moksha* (spiritual abstraction), provides a robust scaffold for this integration, reframing human purpose as inherently ecological.

Conclusion: Reclaiming the Fossil Within

The ecological wisdom of Indigenous traditions challenges the modern conceit of progress as linear and unidirectional. As Harris (1974) suggests, a dialogue with the past—where the "fossil identities" within us are revived—offers a pathway to originality and renewal. This dialogue is not nostalgic but creative, projecting ancestral insights into the substance of the future. For Indigenous communities, this future is inseparable from the land they embody; for Vedic adherents, it is a cosmic order to be upheld through righteous action.

In an era where the planet's survival hinges on reimagining our relationship with nature, these traditions beckon us to transcend the taught prescriptions of modernity

and relearn the world as a living, sacred entity. The Indigenous grandmother's wisdom—"the world is very simple; we make it complicated"—resonates as a clarion call to strip away the artifices of separation and embrace the unity that the Indigenous ecology affirms. By doing so, we may yet forge a path to ecological sustainability that honours the past while safeguarding the future.

This syncretic vision of ecological consciousness finds resonance in the poetic reflections of Octavio Paz (1971), who urges us to reconsider our temporal and spatial frameworks in light of a world where past, present, and future intertwine. His insights, alongside the ecological wisdom of Indigenous traditions, invite us to reimagine our place within the natural order, not as dominators but as participants in a living continuum.

The Mexican poet Octavio Paz is both a creator and commentator and speaks of the urgency of giving a new perspective to our understanding of the world and our creations in it, in order to rediscover freedom and hope. He opens up the horizon for a different kind of time which has begun to replace linear time as the commanding image of human society:

> Past, present and future are no longer values in themselves; nor is there a preferred city, region or space. Five in the afternoon in Delhi is five in the morning in Mexico and midnight in London. The end of modernity implies the end of nationalism and "world art centres" in Schools of Paris or New York; English poetry, Russian novel or Singhalease theatre; modernism or the avant garde—relics of linear time. We all speak simultaneously, if not in the same language, in language. There is no centre, and time has lost its old coherence: East and West, tomorrow and yesterday, are confused in each of us. Distinct times and spaces combine in a now and here which is everywhere and at any time. Over the diachronic vision of art, a synchronic vision is imposed. The movement began when Apollinaire tried to combine various spaces in one poem; Pound and Eliot did the same with history, incorporating in their texts other texts from other times and other languages. These poets thought that in this way they were being modern; that their time was the sum of all times. In fact, they were starting the destruction of modernity. Now the reader and the hearer take part in the creation of the poem and, in the case of music the player also shares in the will of the composer. Old limits are erased and others reappear; we are seeing the end of the idea of art as aesthetic contemplation and returning to something that the West had forgotten: the renaissance of art as collective action and representation, and its contradictory complement, solitary meditation. If the word had not lost its right meaning, I would say: a spiritual art. A mental art, which demands of the reader and listener the sensitivity and the imagination of a performer who, like the musicians of India, is at the same time a creator. The works of the age being born will not be ruled by the idea of linear succession but that of combination: conjunction, dispersion and reunion of languages, spaces and times. Festival and contemplation. Art of conjugation.

This new time is one of the concepts all tribal communities possess and it is related to both the space-time or relativistic physics and the experience of mystics in the liberation of the mind from time. Dismemberment of the individual ego is the source of social and creative activity. It's the realization that at its root the one is everyone. It is through this realization that most tribal communities find communion, metaphor, analogy, which are the means of discovering the living correspondences of all things to each other and in the human mind, and situating them at a centre, which is everywhere. In other words, space and time are forms of perception in which bodies occupy places, and events occur at moments, these events being both external and mental. Though common sense tells us they are separate, it is not possible to distinguish wholly the external from the mental space and time.

Thus the understanding of the Indigenous communities of the environment around them cannot be distinguished between that which is external and that which is part of their psychic being. Therefore, we need to penetrate concrete self-deceptions as well as the complex values with which we have invested objects or orders that we have come to take for granted. The positive way of reacting to this penetration or "erosion of values" is by anticipating, in the logic of the creative imagination, an exposure of involuntary codes by which we are conscripted, and therefore digesting by degrees a state of change which, left to its own natural or unnatural devices, would also overwhelm us in the long run.

The ecological crisis of the Anthropocene demands more than policy reforms and technological innovations; it calls for a radical reimagining of our relationship with nature. Indigenous and Vedic religious practices offer philosophical depth, ethical clarity, and practical frameworks for living sustainably within the biosphere. We must underscore the fact that Indigenous traditions are not primitive systems of belief but sophisticated, adaptive responses to environmental realities—rooted in spiritual, moral, and scientific insights. Likewise, Vedic ecology, when stripped of its hierarchical and textual rigidity, reveals a vibrant, inclusive cosmology that sanctifies nature in every form.

The convergence of these worldviews offers a compelling alternative to the dominant mechanistic, utilitarian paradigms of modernity. By embracing reciprocity, reverence, and relationality as guiding principles, we can move toward a future where development aligns with ecological integrity and spiritual wellbeing.

In the words of Octavio Paz, we must transcend linear time and rediscover the "synchronic" rhythm of life—where past, present, and future coalesce in a sacred now. It is in this temporal reorientation that the wisdom of the forest-dweller and the sage, the grandmother and the goddess, can illuminate a path to planetary healing and cultural renewal. We need to learn from the tribal communities and recognize the fact that the space that is created between the physical and the psychical has within it contrasting spaces, which inheres the contrast being between the cultural biases and the creative imagination endeavouring to free itself from these biases. This space in effect represents a person's mind when his creative imagination seeks to break or revise the physical or conventional world. This is what traditional communities understood very well and we need to understand if we have to survive.

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