

Animal, Vegetable, and Mineral: The Sacred Connection

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Her Song
(for SHEWHO THOUGHT US INTO BEING)

*She is here,
all around us.
She is here,
deep inside us.
She is here,
and everywhere.
Weaver of galax-
ies
and universe,
She enfolds us,
transforms us
and holds us.*

*She is here,
all around us.
She is here,
deep inside us
She is here,*

*Birth Mother of
all heavens
Birth Mother of
every star,
Birth Mother of
each planet
Birth Mother of
everything.
Life Bringer,
Thought Maker,
Song Weaver,
Receiver of all
our dreams.*

*She is here,
all around us.
She is here,
deep inside us.*

This chapter began as a response to a request from Carol Adams that I expand on ideas I first raised in 'New World Tribal Communities' (Sanchez 1989). In that article, I stated my conviction that Euro-American people

waste the resources and destroy the environment in the Americas because they are not spiritually connected to this land-base, because they have no ancient mythos or legendary origins rooted to this land. . . . The conquerors and immigrants had no ancestral lineage that had loved, valued, protected, and cared for this land-base, these homelands to hundreds of native Tribes. . . . They continued to revere the lands of their. . . . ancestral origins for over four hundred years, paying no heed to the delicate ecological balance maintained by the natives. . . . It is my premise that the lack of a land-based Mythos and sacred connection to the ecosystems of the Americas has allowed the Euro-American immigrants to rape and plunder these lands without regret or concern. (Sanchez 1989, 345-48)

As is evident, I do not believe one can merely graft environmental concerns upon the attitudes that have caused the plundering and polluting in the first place.

Addressing a dominant Euro-American audience from a Native American perspective has never been an easy task for me, because I am very aware of the deeply rooted Euro-Western cultural attitudes in our society. As Americans, we were and are educated in a system that was founded on Euro-Western ideas and philosophies that were carefully traced back to 'classical origins' in various European nations. Yet the basic principles of democracy, the freedom of the individual and equality among the people of both genders, come directly from the Native American Nations the first European immigrants lived among in the Americas.¹ The native origins of these principles are still not acknowledged by American leaders and educators, nor are they widely taught in the American education system. American feminism traces its historical roots to the ancient Goddess Cultures through remnants of manuscripts and artefacts found in Europe and the Middle East, yet has overlooked the many women-centered, egalitarian Native American cultures that are presently 'alive and well' in the continental United States. Because I am so accustomed to the ingrained biases held by most non-Indians regarding American Indian cultures, the invitation to reflect critically on these dominant attitudes is especially welcome. I call the reader's attention to the unique approach to daily living long ago established by the first inhabitants of the

Americas – the first Americans. Rather than develop my own solutions to current environmental problems, I will give a few examples of how some of the Meso-American Tribal cultures restored their damaged ecosystems and what they did to ensure they would never recreate those disastrous circumstances. My intention here is to articulate the concept of ‘relationship’ or relatedness and the idea of the sacred in our lives, from a Native American-American Indian² perspective and to suggest some ways of embracing a Tribal way of thinking.

Those of us deeply committed to the restoration of a healthy ‘natural’ environment are searching for ways in which we may facilitate attitudinal shifts in the consciousness of millions of people. When the majority of this nation’s people consider environmental preservation to be more important than plundering it for economic gain, then they (we) will develop more appropriate methods for providing the basic human needs of food, shelter, comfortable indoor temperatures, clothing, and to some extent-unnecessary human ‘comforts’ such as exotic household gadgets, recreational toys, and modes of transportation. Many environmentalists have stated that careful planning in the use of renewable resources and the recycling of non-renewable resources must become the norm rather than the exception in every community across our nation. I would add that we must also acknowledge that humans, along with their creative, inventive minds, are an integral, inseparable part of the ‘natural’ environment. In my worldview, there is nothing under the sun that can be called ‘unnatural’ or separated from nature. My own fundamental worldview stems from a deeply rooted Tribal upbringing that was imparted by my mother, her mother, and her grandmother. These women were born to and raised in one of the women-centred or ‘Gynocratic’³ egalitarian Pueblo cultures of the Southwest. Thus, the context from which I speak is based on my own personal Tribal background, upbringing, and experience, as well as my cumulative knowledge teaching college-level American Indian Studies courses to Indian and non-Indian students for over ten years. It is important for me to note that I am not presenting a ‘new theoretical concept’ but rather an alternative approach to generating practical methods for recreating modern egalitarian social structures among non-Indian, non-Tribal people.

My desire is to open a door through which anyone, so inclined, can step to examine the possibilities of adapting certain Tribal concepts or principles for current daily use in a modern, technological society. I believe that we latter-day modern Americans have much to learn from those earliest inhabitants of the Americas. The study of their Tribal histories and culture stories can provide important insights for those of us committed to environmental restoration and preservation. These stories can guide us in the development of personal attitudes that place doing laundry, going grocery shopping, and working a forty hour week in the realm of ‘the Sacred.’ I will suggest some ways in which non-Indian Americans might set about to create a ‘sense of place’ by establishing spiritual roots to this land mass, or how they might generate a personal creation story or legend that is personalized and connected to the land. Before I proceed further, it is first necessary for me to lay a foundation by briefly restating in general the historical context from which I and other Tribal Native Americans emerged.

“Long, long ago ... they say ...” The ancestors of the native peoples of this Western Hemisphere observed the symbiotic interdependence among plants, creatures, and humans. They observed the interactions between wind, water and fire, sun, moon, and earth, and their effects on plants, creatures, and humans. As these earliest peoples incorporated this information into their daily lives, they noticed that they prospered more often than not when they ‘walked in harmony’ with each other and their environment. They helped each other, shared with each other, and used the resources of the environment sparingly because they benefited by acting in this way. Thus, our long-ago American ancestors used this knowledge to develop a set of social and spiritual principles to guide their daily lives. These principles, developed in the remote past, are the bedrock of all Tribal cultures in the Americas. As the people of those times continued to practice these principles in their daily lives, a specific set of beliefs emerged around these principles. Then, in order to record what they had learned through their experience and to pass on to succeeding generations the knowledge they had gained, they ritually recited what they had observed. These recitations contained what they had come to believe regarding all the information they had collected about their environment and themselves and the explanations as to why all this information was important for the people to remember.

There are many Tribal variations of this process, including the division of knowledge into categories with each different category becoming the responsibility of a clan or family group. Ceremonies among some Tribes require the formal telling of certain stories. Other Tribes perform their ceremonies to reaffirm particular actions or behaviours. However they were individually structured, ceremonial recitations reinforced the historical importance of this knowledge for the Tribe while providing the younger generations with the original source of a given practice such as why the people do this, or should behave like that. Native American Tribal histories and culture stories stress the idea of harmonious coexistence-providing both positive and negative examples, by consistently showing us how everything is related. The stories elaborate in detail the reasons the people should get along with each other and everything they depend on to maintain a ‘good life.’ These stories continue to remind us (as Native American descendants) what our ancestors observed about the relationships in the local ecosystems (from which a given story emerged) and how we learned to survive within them.⁴ The retelling has kept and continues to keep the circle of life uppermost in the daily consciousness of today’s traditional Native Americans. They remind us of the Sacred Ways and the possibility we always have to live a ‘good life.’

Although the Tribal culture stories are definitely ‘loaded’ with morals and ethics (as Western thought systems would define ‘right living’), I use the phrase ‘good life’ because it is difficult for me to use terms such as ‘moral’ and ‘ethical,’ since they carry so much Western baggage. Indians simply say that ‘to live a good life is to walk in Beauty.’ Clearly, when we don’t feel good about our lives, or when we can find no beauty in anything around us in our cities as well as our open countrysides, we are out of balance and out of harmony with everything. Today, in our genuine recognition of the current national ecological imbalances among plant and animal species caused by environmental pollutants of various kinds, many of us are focusing far more on the ugliness than on the remaining beauty that surrounds us. In doing this we become even more out of balance as our thoughts hold more and more negative images thus excluding beauty from our awareness. The Great Mystery continues to surround us with beauty, and it is important to carry more of those images around with us while we attempt to ‘correct’ the imbalances we have

so carelessly brought about. Native Americans do this by remembering their non-human relatives, by 'sending out a song' to them and seeking their guidance.

THE PRINCIPLE OF RELATIONSHIP

Most Euro-American or Euro-Western peoples tend to separate themselves from 'nature' and to rank humans above animals, plants, and minerals in hierarchical fashion, and so it is not easy for them to perceive or accept a personal relationship with what they describe as the 'natural world.' Native Americans believe themselves to be an integral part of the natural world.' When we speak of 'nature,' we are also including ourselves. Our thoughts about nature don't assume humans to be more important and powerful than the rest of our environment, nor do we regard nature as something beneath us to be exploited beyond what we actually need to survive as individuals or as a group. Today, many tribal elders from Tribes throughout the Americas are telling us to be mindful of our relationship to our environment; to remember our relatives; to reclaim and re-establish our sense of connectedness to everything and to acknowledge the sacredness of everything in our universe. More and more contemporary Native American scholars and writers are speaking to non-Indians about Native American ways and spirituality-stressing the need for all of us to respect the land as our Mother Earth, respect the creatures, the waters, the air, and all the elements of our global environment.

During my early childhood I was introduced to the natural environment around me as a place of wonder filled with intricate inter-relationships. My mother taught me to observe where I was walking and what was going on around me as I played outdoors. She explained how ants lived in colonies and how birds, wasps, bees, and other creatures built their homes; how all spiders were our relatives because Spider Grandmother had an important place in our Tribal culture. My mother cautioned me not to destroy any creatures' homes because they had the right to live their lives in their way every bit as much as I did. She also cautioned me to pay attention to the bees, wasps, ants, and poisonous snakes and to stay away from their nests because that stirred them up. She explained how I could be hurt by certain creatures, but I should also understand that when they attacked intruders they were protecting their homes and young from harm, just as she was protecting me by warning me about their stinging and biting abilities. 'They won't bother you if you don't bother them' was a statement my mother, my grandmother, and my great-grandmother repeated on many occasions. My mother often picked up garden snakes, lizards, horned toads, frogs, and baby mice and brought them for me to see up close and hold for a brief time so I wouldn't be afraid of them. With her explanations about insects, snakes, birds, and other 'critters,' she also told stories that included these creatures and how they each had a special place in the world; each had a special task to perform-like bees pollinating plants, and so forth. Some stories were about how certain creatures or elements or the sun got here, and some about how they helped us or each other by doing what they were 'born to do.' If I was bothered by some creature in our yard, I'd tell my grandmother, and she would always say, 'Well, what do you expect? They're just doing their job.'

Growing up with stories and experiences like these gave me a sense of connectedness to my 'home' environment. When I went away to school in a non-Indian environment (in a big city), I discovered that I was one of the very few who had such an attitude toward creatures and trees and rocks. For a long time I just assumed it was because I was a 'country girl,' until it occurred to me that 'white folks' thought of certain creatures as 'pests' or 'predators' and certain plants as 'weeds' and believed they should be killed on the spot. Back home, in the Indian villages, I never heard anyone talk like that. For us, hunting and fishing was for food - never for 'sport.' Years later, when I came in contact with Indian students who had backgrounds similar to mine, I realised how important it was to be raised with respect and care for our environment. We grew up with wonder stories, so we were not afraid when we met up with the 'critters' in our local environment. As Indian children, we were not terrorised about wild creatures, so we don't stir them up with our fear. We are as familiar with the natures and aspects of our local animal populations as we are the natures and personalities of our sisters, brothers, and cousins-because we believe all things are our relatives.

Many of the stories from my early childhood, along with the attitudes and teachings of my mother and grandmothers consistently articulate a concept I call the Principle of Relatedness or Relationship. Every living Tribal culture that I have come across through personal contact or research has this principle embedded in its everyday life, and the extent to which this principle permeates the lives of Tribal people as an important core belief is often overlooked by non-Tribal people. There are many examples of the Principle of Relationship among the Tribes of the Americas, but here, I would like to focus on the Lakota people (a North American Plains Tribe) to illustrate how this principle is incorporated into their cultural framework.

There is a phrase among the Lakota that illustrates how they not only 'relate' to their environment but how they keep their thoughts focused upon their appropriate place within their environment. The phrase, *Mitakuye Oyas'in*, is always spoken at the end of a formal voicing to the spirits. Very loosely translated into English, it means 'all my relations' or 'all my relatives.' This phrase, in fact, represents the Lakota belief in their connectedness to all things outside themselves. Saying 'all my relations' affirms this belief and, because it denotes familial relationship, consistently reminds the speaker of her or his personal connection to the universe. In addition to reminding the speaker of her personal relationship with all things, she is also reminding those non-human things that they are indeed related to her. This implies the kinds of interdependencies and interactions that take place within a family unit. Wallace Black Elk, a Lakota Medicine Man, stresses this Tribal principle when he speaks at conferences and gatherings focused on environmental issues. He firmly believes this way of thinking must be shared with all people of all races, and in sharing the beliefs of his traditional upbringing, attempts to communicate this attitude to non-Indians. The following quote is an example of the Lakota approach to life:

This Chanunpa (Sacred Pipe) is your relative. The Powers of the Few: Winds are your relatives. Pray to them. Talk to them. They are your relatives. To the west - the Thunder Beings, they are your relatives. Send a voice out there. These are your rela-

tives. Look to the north, the Buffalo Nation – White Buffalo Calf Maiden – The Chanunpa – these are your relatives. To the east, the Elk Nation and The Elk Nation Woman, that brings joy’ and happiness, these are your relatives. To the south, the Swan, two legged spirits that bring joy and happiness. The medicine people that bring joy and health come from there. These are your relatives. Above you is the Eagle Nation. They watch, control, govern. These are your relatives. Down to Earth – the Stone People [and the green] are your relatives. (Black Elk and Lyon 1990, 39)

Over and over, Wallace reminds us of our familial relationship with creatures, elements, plants, and minerals, as well as humans. In addition to relationship, he illustrates the Tribal attitude of inclusiveness within a spatial orientation. Our connection to and support from the earth is reinforced by the acknowledgement of the directions. They are the marker points of the circle from which we view all that is external to us as human beings, and he invites us to include everything we see outside ourselves as one of our relatives.

The most basic example of relationship that non-Indians acknowledge in our country today exists within the traditional Western family unit. Most of us rightly assume (because of personal experiences) that family members care for each other and take care of each other. When we need help, we often ask our immediate relatives first. We assume our family members will help us because, generally, our experience has taught us to expect it. They of course assume they can ask for our help and we would gladly give it. Since we already have a conscious awareness of family interrelatedness that includes nurturing, assistance, and – for the most part-thoughtful consideration, one might ask: Why not include the rest of creation in our family circle? It’s a short step to take and wouldn’t require adopting an entirely new attitude concerning relationship but merely an e-x-p-a-n-s-i-o-n of our current notions about what (or who) constitutes our personal family. If we think of everything non-human as closely related to us, it would be quite normal and natural behaviour for us to call on our non-human relatives for help. It would be perfectly natural for us to expect assistance from them and for us to help them in appropriate ways. For traditionally raised and tribally connected American Indians, this extension is incorporated during early childhood, as I have indicated earlier regarding my own childhood instruction.

It may be difficult for Euro-Americans to accept this way of thinking with a large degree of seriousness and open-mindedness, for a variety of reasons. Yet, if we examine the ancient Tribal cultures around us who have managed to survive and endure, in spite of all Euro-Western efforts to destroy their way of life, we can learn, at the very least, how they managed to adapt to the imposed ways of the conqueror and still maintain the core of their spiritual traditions. Euro-Americans can adapt many of the life-preserving concepts practised by the original American cultures and apply them to ordinary daily life. Indeed, this is precisely what Wallace Black Elk is inviting everyone with whom he comes in contact to do, because, as a practising Medicine Man, he knows that what we believe about our reality largely determines our experience and if we believe we are related to everything else in the universe we will then experience this connectedness. From his perspective, acquiring this belief can result in a personal connection to the environment around us.

What I suggest here has nothing to do with ‘stealing Native American spiritual practices,’ or dances, or songs, or social customs, which I will discuss later. It has to do with acknowledging and utilising a way of thinking that pervades the daily lives of Tribal people. It is a way of thinking that has sustained the first Americans for thousands of years and kept them, if you will, from totally destroying resources they depended on for survival. How we think about things generates our attitudes about our world and how we treat it. I think all Americans are becoming more aware of this because of their experiences with the many contemporary issues facing us today (most importantly world harmony and an ecologically balanced global environment).

RESTORING BALANCE AND HARMONY

Certainly in the course of their histories, the original Americans experienced ecological disasters of varying proportions. Archaeological site studies of ancient North and South American native cultures gave rise to a variety of assumptions about those early civilisations. In the mid 1800s, Western archaeologists stated that the people of certain ‘highly sophisticated’ Meso-American cultures of Mexico and Central America disappeared because their farming practices were so terrible the topsoil was ruined, causing them to starve to death. When carbon dating and the study of tree rings became acceptable scientific tools during the late 1940s, other archaeologists discovered that around the time the topsoil would no longer produce adequate crops these people were also plagued with a lengthy drought cycle. Shortly thereafter, Euro-Western archaeologists advanced the theory that the majority of the population in these areas starved to death due to famine and ignorant farming practices. Results of recent studies of the Meso-American Mayan culture support certain aspects of these former ‘disappearance theories’⁵. However, the people didn’t entirely disappear. They reorganised into smaller groups and moved away from the over-farmed areas. In fact, according to their Tribal histories, many subgroups migrated much further north and resettled in semiarid lands.

Although the oral histories still told by the descendants of these earlier ancestors explain what happened, Euro-centrism does not allow ‘quaint myths and legends’ to be regarded as factual information. The ‘scholarly premise’ has been that over time, oral records cannot be verified and accepted as historical evidence, since ‘people forget things and make up things.’ We know the Mayas were a literate culture, that their histories and philosophies were recorded in books, and that their great libraries were destroyed by the Spaniards shortly after conquest. In spite of this loss, they have remained a traditional ceremonial culture and have continued to retell their histories into the present day, although this seems to be generally disregarded by Euro-Western archaeologists and historians.

Other Tribes, particularly on the plains or in the north woods regions of North America, have been cited by Western archaeologists as having such wasteful and destructive hunting practices that many species of animals were reduced to endangered levels ‘long before the white man came around.’ What is not reported very often (if at all, in my experience with these written materials on Indian practices) is that the various

Tribes so indicted have not hidden these 'facts' from their succeeding generations. On the contrary, the stories of those events, which caused suffering among the people and damage to a regional ecosystem, are solemnly recited at various times during the year or every so many years. This is done so the members of those Tribes would always remember what happened as a result of their greed or lack of careful preparation and thus never bring about such destructive conditions again. Detailed explanations of the ecological disasters that were brought about by the Meso-American pyramid and apartment builders have been preserved in the oral histories of various Tribal groups that descended from them. Many of these stories tell us that the people began to deviate from their Sacred Ways and became greedy and quarrelsome. Some of the recorded Pueblo stories tell how the men gambled all night and slept all day; how they violated the women and ceased performing their sacred duties. The stories speak of the women neglecting the children and gossiping with each other for hours instead of performing their sacred duties. They tell of a time the people took more than they really needed from their creature relatives and Earth Mother. They no longer treated each other and their environment with respect. They ceased honouring their relatives – their brother and sister creatures, plants, elements, and minerals. Their Mother Earth and Father Sky and Sister Moon were forgotten, left out of their thoughts. They became more and more disconnected and continued to commit acts of violence against each other and the things in their environment. As a direct result, the plants, the creatures, and the elements abandoned the people.

Long ago ... they say... Father Sun burned their crops. The Thunder Beings, the Rain Spirits, and the Water spirits went away. With the help of the Wind Brothers, Mother Earth sent her rich blanket (topsoil) to other places far away from the people. And so the people suffered. The people suffered a long time before they would change their way of living, before they remembered how to ask for help and how to include all their relatives in their thoughts again. Then, all the people that wanted to change the way they were living came together and began to focus their thoughts towards this goal. As a group, they asked to be forgiven. As a group, they asked for guidance. As a group they sought to re-establish their connection to all the things in their environment. After they did this for a time, their thoughts were more in harmony with this goal. Finally, they received the guidance they 'prayed' for. When they began to receive instructions in their dreams they knew the Spirits had forgiven them. They paid attention to these visionary instructions, strictly following them, and soon the conditions in the environment around them changed. The rains came and the streams were filled. The animals came near enough to give themselves up for food again. The medicine plants came back and the corn grew tall and the squash and beans and chillies were many. The grasses grew everywhere again and the people were saved.

Some Tribal stories say Corn Mother told them how to we for her so their corn yield would be enough to feed all the people. Some Tribes say that Rain God appeared and told them just how to ask for his help. Some say that Water Sister told them how to treat her and exactly where to make a path for her so she could nourish their Corn Children. Others say that Earth Mother told them how to treat her by telling them when and where to plant; what to plant together and what to plant separately; when and how often to give her a rest; how to sing her to sleep; how to wake her up. Some say the spirits of these things came to them, whispered into their ears, and told them what they should do so these conditions would not 'come into being' ever again.

Ah these stories, with their many tribal variations, tell us how the indigenous Native people continued to survive, and because they had learned the consequences of separating themselves from the 'natural world,' they never wanted to forget that hard lesson. They did not want their children, grandchildren, or the children of future generations to suffer as they had at that time. By presenting examples of wars in which the people could change, examples of better ways to live together, the Origin Stories and Tribal Histories also emphasise that conscious and appropriate choices must be made. And finally, the stories illustrate how the people found their way back to the 'good life' they once had when they honoured and respected each other and the rest of creation; the 'good life' they had before they became thoughtless and self-indulgent. Thus, the old stories teach today's generations of Native American people how their ancestors consciously sought to be mindful of their place within rather than above the rest of creation. Through these stories we know that some of the people decided to return to their old nomadic life-style of hunting and gathering and by doing this, gave up their stable food source. However, there were others who apparently kept the new technology but were willing to seek new ways of food production less destructive to their local ecosystems in order to keep their relatively dependable food source.

Closer examination of the earlier oral histories and the 'disaster' stories of specific Tribes (such as some South-western Pueblos or Mexico's Huichols and Mayas) indicates a transition period for these ancient cultures at the point a new technology was emerging-a period much like the advent of the Euro-Western machine age, information age, or nuclear age. The earlier historical stories clearly describe that as hunter-gatherers, some of the Meso-American Tribes were quite accomplished at fitting into the environment that provided what they needed to feed, shelter, clothe, and heal themselves by maintaining a psychic connection to it. When I first encountered the descriptions of how the people became greedy and quarrelsome, I wondered why. The Origin Stories describe in detail how these folks were deeply connected to their environment. They knew where to go, where to look for the things they needed for survival, and had created an intricate ceremonial system to honour all the natural resources they were so dependent upon. What had happened to change them into thoughtless, selfish people? The simplest answer would be: 'Well, that's human nature,' yet that made no sense to me, because of the communal harmony and environmental connection described in other stories. Clearly the Tribal peoples of Meso-America had already developed solutions for conflicts initiated by the vagaries of human nature, and these solutions are embedded in the cultural histories. Something unusual must have happened to drastically change the way they had lived and behaved in prior generations. Some thing event, or idea came into their lives that eventually produced greed, violent conflict, oppression and the destruction of their environment-and it was 'a something' they were either unprepared for, unaware of, or both. Suppose the emergence of a new technology caught them unprepared? Suppose this technology arrived on the scene so gradually they were actually unaware of its in-

trusion into their everyday lives? I propose that that's exactly what happened when certain hunter-gatherer groups shifted to farming. My own Tribal perspective tells me that these disastrous results occurred precisely because the people had most likely neglected to incorporate this 'new technology' into their established spiritual framework as they were developing it.

Archaeologists tell us that the 'corn cultures' of Meso-America progressed slowly from small, randomly sown and unattended patches of corn to more carefully sown and tended patches. The average yield was, at first, enough for that season's consumption, with some left over that they dried and saved for the next spring planting. Many seasons and several generations later, the cultivation of a dependable food source required them to settle in one place permanently in order to guard their crops from animals and nomadic bands from other Tribes. Permanent settlement produced larger, heavier, and less portable tools with which they could work greater areas of land. Crude storage caches became improved, and they could amass larger quantities of food for longer periods of time. More food feeds more people, and more people require more housing, until finally, huge urban complexes were built in the Valley of Mexico, the Yucatan, and the Four Corners area in the United States Southwest. As these new food production practices gradually emerged, I believe the people in those areas were not prepared for the importance cultivation would assume in their daily lives. Indeed, they were so intent on amassing greater stores of food against losses from 'thieving nomads' or periods of drought they spent more of their time on the 'manufacture' of new tools for cultivation, the building of storage granaries, and clearing and tilling more land. Hunting, fishing, and root gathering were still important activities, but they became less so as the variety of crops they were able to cultivate increased. Undoubtedly, as they became more involved with farming and its time-consuming tasks, they neglected to observe the effects this intensive technology was having on the local ecosystem, so when the negative effects finally became apparent to them, the damage was irreversible. As hunter-gatherers, they had no reason to create a ceremonial structure for planting and harvesting, as it had not been an integral part of their lives, and so the early stories don't include (and wouldn't) the mention of special dances or songs for planting and harvesting at certain times. These same stories do mention specific ritual preparations for hunting and describe feasts of thanksgiving after successful hunts. In fact, in several of the corn-culture Tribes, there are stories of how rain dances or rain ceremonies were brought to the People after they were settled in their present villages for some time. In some instances, the retelling of the 'bad times' the people experienced by turning their attention away from their local ecosystem occurs during rain or planting ceremonies.

When we examine current Pueblo farming practices (in the South-western United States), we find a ceremonial framework surrounding the planting, growing, and harvesting of corn. From the preparation of the fields for planting through each phase of the growing season and finally the harvest, ceremonies are enacted that demonstrate a *technology made sacred*. Thus, the later stories, *along with the present-day examples* of 'ceremonial farming'⁷ would indicate that many of the Tribes did, in fact, eventually *return to the essence* of the Old Ways by incorporating this new technology into their previously established spiritual framework. The positive outcomes of the spiritual regeneration that took place at that time are emphasised through these ceremonial recountings to their descendants.

The Pueblos of the Southwest United States, particularly Hopi Zuni, and Acoma, still maintain pre-contact agrarian practices noted by twentieth-century scholars as examples of 'perfected farming techniques.' These techniques include: terracing of fields; leaving fields fallow for a minimum period of three years; periodic burning of corn stubble before turning the soil, and finally, always planting crops of beans, corn, and squash (the Three Sisters) together. Today's Western agricultural science supports these practices as ecologically sound methods for preserving precious topsoil. My point here is to bring attention to the lessons already learned by many of the stable, highly sophisticated Meso-American cultures as an example of how a people united in thought and purpose restored the ecological balance to their environment.

Among us today, there are people who would return to the 'old agrarian ways' of the pre-industrial period; some would even return to the hunter-gatherer period. There are others, like me, who believe we can keep the beneficial technologies that have emerged among us and, with careful planning, can rethink and revise the present methods of modern production to make them less destructive to our local ecosystems. However the new technologies appeared in our realities, they are here, and it is possible to incorporate them into our spiritual frameworks if we so desire. Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, all human creations to date come from Mother Earth – from Her Body. She provides the 'raw materials' of our 'inventions.' Humans are just one of the many species of creatures that her body nourishes and sustains. Native Americans believe the Great Mystery placed us on earth to do just what it is we do. We belong to the Great Circle of Life, along with the rest of creation. Everything in the heavens and on the earth is natural, is part of the 'natural world' – including humans. An earthquake is a violent 'natural' act, as is a volcanic explosion or the destructive force of a hurricane, and yet not one of us would judge or condemn such an event as 'unnatural' or meddling tampering with the environment. Oddly, when humans disturb the ecological balance by tampering with the environment, Euro-Westerners judge themselves and 'others' (non-Westerners) of committing unnatural acts or creating unnatural technologies. I believe this to be a misnomer that carries considerable negative side effects for us, both mentally and psychically. It forces us to continually instruct ourselves that we don't belong to the natural world-that human creativity is unnatural or alien. Our spirits know this to be untrue. 'Anti-nature' is a more accurate way to describe a selfish technology that arbitrarily destroys creature and plant species. Technologies come into being in the natural world out of the substance of the natural world through the miracle of human thought and, whether humans or bees or birds or earthquakes or volcanoes or hurricanes or tornadoes or dash floods or radioactivity manipulate the environment, most Native Americans view all of them as natural occurrences. We also know that when we become extremely self-indulgent with our 'creativity,' focusing on ourselves to the exclusion of all our non-human relatives, they will abandon us. We have this experience in our past, and we have been raised to remember that we are all 'equal' in the thought of the Great Mystery. Our duty to ourselves is to restore our own balance within the rest of creation.

There is much practical information available in the old stories still told by many of the North and South American Indian Tribes. In recent years, members of many different Tribes have attended universities on both continents and have been recording much of this information in writ-

ten form – most particularly the histories of their Tribes. Some Tribes are still reluctant to have their ceremonial practices recorded in print or on tape or film, and these wishes should be honoured by all outsiders. But, where there has been a concerted effort by diminishing Tribal groups to preserve not only their histories but also their sacred ways, I truly feel that Western scholars can learn a great deal if they would study these materials. In some instances (though not all), a Western analytical approach to these ‘stories’ can concretely fill in the gaps and possibly provide us with some viable solutions relevant to this land base for today’s ecological imbalances. However, care must be taken in using this approach. I make this point because Western scholars (for the most part) are mono-cultural and perceive other cultures through their academically trained Western bias. Academically trained Native American scholars are bicultural and in reality, walk in two worlds - the Indian world and the Euro-Western world. It is important for non-Indians to keep this in mind, simply because the dominant perspective or thought system of the Western Hemisphere is Euro-centric. Willis Harman explains cultural bias in a most understandable way in his recent book:

Now each of us, from infancy onward, is subjected to a complex set of suggestions from our social environment, which in effect teaches us how to perceive the world. We may from time to time, especially in early childhood, have experiences that do not conform to this cultural norm-but we eventually ‘correct’ these perceptions and cease experiencing the anomalies, through the power of the socializing process. And so each of us is literally hypnotised from infancy to perceive the world the way people in our culture perceive it.

In the modern world this ‘cultural hypnosis’ extends to experiencing a world in which ‘scientific laws’ are always obeyed-whereas in other, more ‘primitive’ cultures, ‘violations’ of these laws may be relatively commonplace. For example, the phenomenon of changing inner beliefs to such an extent that one can with impunity walk barefoot over burning coals ... is one which has for centuries been observable in a variety of pre-modern societies. (Harman 1988, 19-20)

Ideally, non-Indian scholars will make an extra effort to establish contacts and dialogues with American Indian scholars throughout the United States, Canada, Alaska, and Mexico. Although Mexico is still struggling to reclaim its Indian origins, European-born monotheism still prevails, and Tribal natives there are isolated and looked down upon for their ‘indigenous lifestyles and ceremonial practices.’ In spite of this, there are many Mexican Indian scholars who were raised in their Native traditions and who continue to respect as well as steadfastly claim their Indian heritage. Again, it takes extra effort to identify them. Hundreds of books, articles, and research papers have been written about all the Tribes in North America by early (as well as later) Euro-Western historians, ethnologists, and ethnographers-much of it with sensitivity and insight and with the best of intentions.

The most difficult obstacle to overcome with this non-Indian authored material is the Western penchant for comparing the rest of the world to itself and making root assumptions accordingly. These authors tend to automatically credit Western civilisation as the most advanced culture on the planet, using it as the highest pinnacle of human attainment. This is indeed a mono-cultural bias and patently absurd to those of us who derive from cultures whose living histories date back some ten thousand years and more. This is not to disparage Western scholars; rather I would caution my readers to weigh the volumes of information available on American Indians thoughtfully. Again, Willis Harman’s explanation of ‘cultural hypnosis’ is quite candid and helpful in this context. He goes on to state:

These several examples emphasise the difficulty of distinguishing the extent to which the ‘reality’ we perceive is peculiar to our cultural hypnosis. We tend to find it curious that other ‘primitive’ or ‘traditional’ cultures should perceive reality in the way they do – *so obviously discrepant with the modern scientific worldview*. It is harder to entertain the thought that we in modern Western society might have our own cultural peculiarities in the way we perceive the world-that our reality might be as parochial in its way as that of the Middle Ages appears to us now. Since Western science is the ‘best’ knowledge system yet devised, it seems reasonable to consider our values ‘normal,’ our predilections ‘natural,’ and our perceived measured world ‘real.’

It was hard [in the early seventeenth century] to ‘see’ challenging information precisely because the old belief system provided a coherent picture of the world which *worked*. Likewise it is not comfortable for some of us, in the late twentieth century, to recognise the parochial nature of our prevailing belief system (even though it may seem to be based on the best science available). It is hard for us to ‘see’ evidence that doesn’t fit in, and that suggests the conventional worldview may be in a state of fundamental change. Despite our discomfort, it is essential to consider that possibility. (Harman 1988, 20; emphasis mine)

And though white Euro-Westerners have created the most sophisticated tools of massive destruction and the most self-centred ideologies of any race on the planet, Native American philosophies say: ‘They are our relatives.’ Many Native American prophecies state that: ‘It is our duty to show them how to Walk In Beauty—with us.’ It is important for all of us to find our ‘Beauty Way,’ and Native American spiritual frameworks can provide examples of ways in which non-Indians can ‘tune in’ to the spirit force of *this land*.

NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRITUAL FRAMEWORKS

To be spiritual, or inclined to honour, respect, and acknowledge the elements of our universe (both physical and non-physical) that sustain and nourish our lives, seems to be an innate aspect of human beings. Among traditional Tribal people, to be spiritual is to be aware and accepting of spirit or the Spirit World and to believe in a spirit force or power that manifests itself in all things. When Native Americans refer to themselves as spiritual people, they are saying they believe that everything in the universe is imbued with spirit and they embrace, acknowledge, and

respect the animating force within /surrounding/beyond all things-including humans. The idea of 'the Sacred' held by traditional Indians is all-inclusive, and to be connected to the Spirit World is to be 'in communion' with the Great Mystery. This concept also carries a mandate for the people to strive to achieve harmony within their community and its surrounding environment, to 'Walk in Beauty' or 'see the Good in everything.' This internal sense of harmony, when expressed externally, gave rise to the creation of ceremonies that honoured all life, sustaining and transformation processes in the natural world for both humans and non-humans. Generally speaking, non-Tribal people do not embrace this concept. Most organised non-Indian religions accept spirit or soul as a non-tangible aspect of humans. In American English, to be spiritual is usually understood to mean either being very religious or a practising devotee of some religious sect who exhibits all the required virtues. The emphasis here is on humans interacting with each other. Being a good person usually means you are kind to your neighbours and friends and loving to your family; you are generous, helpful, pleasant, a pillar of the community doing good deeds for others. What is missing is the distinct *inclusion of non-humans*. Being a good person in Tribal terms means your good behaviour and intentions are extended toward creatures, plants, and elements, as well as humans.

I have stated elsewhere that it is not my intention to 'Indianize' anyone, but to present practical alternatives to our current ecological imbalances by providing examples of a 'living philosophy' that not only originated from this land base but has endured into the present. It is because the land-based social structures of the original Americans continue to provide the core traditional patterns from which these peoples draw their spiritual nourishment and practical approach to daily life that I am strongly suggesting that the many principles (philosophical, spiritual, and social) that emerged through these earliest inhabitants are the true legacy of all American-born individuals. However, I am also aware of the conflicts surrounding the study of, the borrowing of, the adapting from, or just being influenced by the Native American way of life. My personal experience tells me it is important to speak directly to some of the possible objections concerning my statements about Tribal principles and the risks involved for non-Indians who embrace a 'Native American perspective.' Obviously, approaching our daily lives in a 'sacred manner' is not the sole province of any one Tribe, or any particular culture, for that matter. In addition, dancing and singing to the beat of drums or other percussion instruments cannot be claimed as the exclusive right of any racial group of people, nor is the purifying of the body through fasting and cleansing in some manner or the offering of the smoke of some substance to the 'spirit world' (be it sage, tobacco, frankincense, or sandalwood). What seems to be lacking at the moment concerning the issues around cultural or religious theft is clear articulation about the dos and don'ts regarding any particular culture's sacred forms. The question now becomes: How can non-Indians know what kinds of rituals or ceremonies they can perform without infringing upon some Tribe's sacred religious-spiritual practice?

I believe the way in which certain acts are put together and consistently repeated designates them as a cultural form of worship or honouring and therefore 'belonging to' a particular group. So, in order to infringe upon or desecrate any Tribal religion, an 'outsider' would have to sing 'sacred' songs in a particular language (Navaho, Lakota, Cherokee, and so forth) while executing the steps of dances traditionally done to those songs by a given Tribe. Then, and only then, can tribal elders say outsiders are truly stealing their sacred practices. Songs, dances, ceremonies, and sacred rites *are created by people* for very specific reasons and purposes.

Every ceremony and sacred rite ever practised on this planet was invented by humans to be performed by humans-one or hundreds. The motivation is generally inspired by the witnessing of the mysteries and cycles of transformation continuously assailing our physical senses. The awe we experience-the joy, love, or grief that overwhelms us-inspires us to express in some fashion our brief encounter with that which is beyond physical touch but is within reach of our inner senses. When this happens, we achieve a kind of 'knowing' that we have somehow been touched by something beyond us. A knowing that we cannot articulate often leads us to celebrate this personal event (or in many cases, communal event) through some form of expression. When Tribal peoples experienced a brief encounter with the Great Mystery, they celebrated this experience with chanting and rhythmic movements. The Tribes view these celebrations or ceremonies as sacred because the intent of the performers and the witness/participants is one of reverence and respect. It is within this context that traditional Tribal Indian people view all the elements that make up our universe as sacred. They acknowledge that all 'others' are entitled to and deserving of existence along with us and therefore to be celebrated as sacred components-of their realities.

While Euro-Westerners define sacred as 'set apart or dedicated to religious uses, hallowed as opposed to profane,' American Indians make no such arbitrary division. If the Great Spirit or Great Mystery holds everything in its thought, then everything is sacred. Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary goes on to state that sacred means 'pertaining or relating to deity, religion, or hallowed places or things.' Among Indians, sacred is sacred. It pertains to all and everything. If a place or ceremony or objects are considered extra special, then they say it is filled with power or is powerful. Items of special significance are thought of as places of power or power objects, and some places or things are more powerful than others, but they are all always considered sacred to begin with. Some ceremonies are more solemn than others, but it is always understood that whatever the people are doing, they will be doing it in a sacred manner. Sacred also means 'consecrated and dedicated to a person or purpose.' I concur, as would any traditional Indian. Of course we are consecrated and dedicated, to ourselves, each other, our world, and Wakan Tanka (Lakota), or Thought Woman (Laguna and Acoma), or Maheo (Cheyenne) or the Great Mystery or Great Spirit, and – fulfilling our life paths – 'walking our individual roads' is a consecrated and dedicated purpose. Finally, the most fundamental meaning of the word *Sacred* for Native Americans is 'entitled to reverence and respect; not to be profaned; inviolable.' American Indians believe the universe and everything in it is 'entitled to reverence and respect' because it exists. Thus the Tribal Principle of Relationship, that we are all related, is a natural extension of this belief. The Tribes teach that when we are disrespectful, irreverent, or abusive to the inhabitants of our environment, they will abandon us. They will no longer give themselves up for us if we disconnect ourselves from them.

Native Americans believe the animals and plants they need for sustenance and healing 'give up' or 'give away' their lives so the people can con-

tinue to exist. Observing animal and plant life taught the Tribes that ecological balance was maintained through interdependence and reasonable use. Following the natural laws in operation around them, Native American Tribes practised reasonable use rather than denial. As various Tribes discovered the consequences of taking more than they could reasonably use, they changed their thoughtless, destructive practices to more thoughtful, life-promoting ones and incorporated this knowledge into their Tribal histories. They instituted various forms of ceremonial Give Aways instead of structuring accumulation of things and property into their social systems as human achievements to be esteemed and honoured. The Give Aways recycled tools, clothing, ornamental, ceremonial and household items among the members of the Tribe and guaranteed the most basic needs for the less capable or handicapped.

ADAPTATION AND PRACTICE OF TRIBAL PRINCIPLES

In 'Indian fashion,' I have presented several 'idea blocks' as examples of other possibilities for generating new ways to think about our local, regional, and global environment. In restating some historical information about certain Tribal practices (documented in more detail in many other sources), I hope I have provided the impetus for incorporating a too-often-neglected perspective in our search for holistic, life-sustaining practices for today's global communities.

In my introduction, I stated that I would offer some suggestions for facilitating attitudinal shifts in consciousness and becoming more open to Tribal ways of thought. I said I would present some ways that non-Indians might use to create a sense of place, generate a personal legend or origin story, and adapt a few valuable Tribal principles to fit a modern technological world.

Let's begin with the idea or Tribal concept of the Sacred. If non-Indians can accept the Native American premise that all of creation is held in the creative thought of the Great Mystery (or in the Mind of She Who Thought Us into Being), then it is an easy step to adopt the concept that everything in heaven and on earth-including the human race-is truly sacred. If we believe that everything is sacred, then the most mundane tasks take on a deeper meaning. One approach is to consciously ritualise ordinary actions such as awakening to each new day, the preparation of foods, of the accomplishment of daily tasks. For example, the Apache day is begun this way. An individual male arises at dawn, leaves the house, faces east, and begins singing a song to assist the sun in its journey over the horizon. This is considered a sacred duty, and the song is one of joyful greeting. Grinding corn for ceremonial use is still done by many Indians on a stone slab (a *matate*) on the floor and is not an easy task to perform. In traditional Navajo families, corn is ground by the women, but the men help to lighten the drudgery by sitting nearby, singing joyful corn-grinding songs. This is done to keep the thoughts of the grinder happy and cheerful, so the resulting foods offered in ceremony and/or eaten by the family will not have unhappy or 'tired-aching-back-and-knees-thoughts' in them. It is believed that if the woman grinding the corn is cheerful, the food will be well received and blessed by the spirits and will be nourishing for the family.⁸

If you love your home but hate the job that fills the icebox and pays the rent and utilities, then your thoughts are out of balance, according to our way of thinking. If you love your home but hate the city or town where you live, then you are out of harmony with your life's circumstances. Suppose you thought of your job as a sacred duty that assists you (as it does) to maintain your private residence? Suppose you think about all the beautiful places in your city that may have been sacred places at one time for the original native inhabitants? Every city and town in the United States was once a special place for native Tribal peoples, too, because people instinctively locate themselves in spots that are energizing and nourishing to them – physically, psychically, and spiritually. There are trees and grasses and flowers and birds and ants and bees waiting for you to 'send your songs to them' – to say hello to them – to call them sister, brother, cousin, or friend. They are your relatives; they hear your thoughts as you travel around your town or city, back and forth from your home.

Begin where you are. Do you have a baking song? You can create one. How about making up a song for grocery shopping or a song for making your laundry sparkle? You can create a food blessing poem to thank the spirits of the foods you eat for giving themselves up for your nourishment. They give themselves up so your breath may continue. Native Americans believe that plants as well as animals do this willingly when we acknowledge their great gift of life to us – even grocery-store food! We are taught that if we always do this, no foods will harm us, because the spirit of that food will think kindly of us. We believe that *how we think about ourselves and our environment, but how we will experience it in our day-to-day existence?* So we strive to be thankful to the spirit world around us, consciously every day, including our relatives in our thoughts to remain in harmony and balance. There are other systems that teach similar things. Recently, much has been written about various foods that are harmful for this or that reason, but there are also many groups of people who still adhere to their old-fashioned (pre-scientific, non-Western beliefs and have proven that these foods or substances are not harmful to them. Shifting our consciousness to focus more on nourishing and helpful examples can be far less harmful to us as well as our non-human relatives. Focusing on destructive forces all the time causes feelings of despair and, too often, a sense of powerlessness to do anything to change these dreadful circumstances. When we seek the beauty and wonder of creation, creation responds by bringing more beauty and wonder for us to be glad about and thankful for. The Navajo people call this the Beauty Way, and all North American Tribes have similar philosophies.

Where you live now was once home to your Native American ancestors hundreds or, possibly, thousands of years ago. Who were they? What is their history of the place where you live? That history is also your legacy. How did the Tribal ancestors come to be in that place? Did they originate in the east or north and migrate there? Maybe that Tribe originated in that very place. Your local library probably has the resources that will answer these questions. Answering these questions for yourself will give you a different perspective of your present 'land base.' How did you come to this place? When did your family (parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents) arrive? Where did they originate? Write your own Migration Story. Trace the wanderings of your own people and, if you can, the reasons they or you finally settled in the place you now call home. Doing this can give you a stronger and more conscious connection to your present homeplace.

Next, identify the prominent landmarks surrounding your homeplace (not the human-made marks). According to their historical traditions, how did the Tribe(s) relate to these landmarks? What significance was assigned to them (for example, special sacred places for receiving visions, for locating healing plants of the region)? Find out what the original plant and creature life in your region was; the ecological interaction and interdependence between plants, animals, insects, birds, air and winds, water, and earth. Consider what has changed about your environment since European contact. How have the creatures and plants adapted to the changes? Then centre yourself in the region where you make your home and introduce yourself to the spirits of your place. Greet the plant, creature, mineral, wind, water, earth, and sky spirits. Make a song to them. Do this in a sacred manner and you may be surprised by what you will begin to notice happening around you. If your intention to become connected to your land base is sincere, the resulting experiences will be very rewarding and personally enriching. If you will follow through on a few of these suggestions, you will attune yourself to your homeplace, and if you make it a point to acknowledge your local non-human surroundings on a daily basis (several times a day, preferably), your environment will begin to respond to you *according to your thoughts*. Welcome all your relatives into your immediate family. Approach each day in a sacred manner and with a healthy sense of humour. Our relatives will help us if we ask them to help. Our relatives will forgive us if we ask for their forgiveness and make a serious commitment not to repeat our previous mistakes. If we 'send our voices out to them,' as Wallace Black Elk suggests – if we can believe they are our relatives – they will instruct us as Earth Mother, Corn Mother, Water Sister, Rain God, the Thunder Beings, and the Wind Brothers did for our ancestors, so long ago. If we all open our hearts and minds to this rich legacy, we may discover many creative solutions to our ecological dilemmas.

These are my suggestions for restoring our own balance and harmony with All That Is. I know it is possible, because the Pueblo people of the arid Southwest come together to dance for the corn in the heat of the dry summers year after year-and it rains. They must not harbour thoughts or talk about 'how dry it is' or 'how hot it is' or 'what if it won't rain' or 'yes, but the weather person said.' Instead, they imagine the Cloud People appearing in a cloudless sky, building huge formations of vapour and then dancing up there to release the Rain Spirits on the cornfields. They imagine the gentle rains falling on the fields and imagine how glad the Corn Children will be when the Rain Spirits come to 'visit them.' When the people dress for the Corn Dances, they imagine the corn plants growing taller and taller, the ears perfectly shaped and plump with fat kernels of corn. These are the kinds of thoughts they hold when they dance for the Corn Children.

The examples of this 'Way of Thinking and Believing' are many and not restricted to the Southwest United States. The beneficial results of Rain Dances, Corn Dances, Deer Dances, and other Tribal ceremonies practised by Tribal peoples all over the planet have been documented by many credible scientists and social scientists. The implications of these ancient Tribal thought systems are immense. I believe that many basic Tribal principles can be adapted to fit modern daily life and can produce the appropriate ecological changes we are seeking.

I trust your creative imaginations to expand on the somewhat brief and generalised historical examples of the few Tribal principles I have discussed here, with the hope you will find these important concepts helpful in your own lives.

May your heart and mind find the Beauty Way, and may peace through balance and harmony be yours in all your days on Mother Earth.

Notes

1. Sanders and Peek 1973, 183-92, in their introduction to Chap. 4 they discuss how Benjamin Franklin's knowledge of and interaction with the League is never mentioned in standard American history texts. This American and Euro-Western penchant for 'disappearing' an American Indian Confederacy of Nations as a foundational source for the structure of United States governmental institutions is further and more recently documented by Weatherford 1988, Chap. 8.
2. I use the terms *Native American*, *American Indian*, *First Americans*, *Indian(s)* and *Native(s)* interchangeably, because it is comfortable for me to do so and because much of the literature written about and by American Indians uses all of these terms to designate the first or original inhabitants of the Americas.
3. Allen 1986b, 3-29. Paula introduces this term and the framework for its usage in this essay.
4. Early non-Indian ethnographers collected tribal stories in virtually every region of the United States. Since the mid 1970s, many Native American communities have published collections of their Tribal stories and histories for their own use in school programs and to provide the public-at-large with informative materials written from their own perspective. A collection such as Beck and Walters, 1977 is an example of a comprehensive Indian-authored text and excellent source of many American Indian Tribal teachings. Other similar publications can often be found in local libraries or local historical museums – particularly if the museum has a display on early Indian inhabitants of the area.
5. *The National Geographic*, Vol 176, no. 4 (October 1989) 'La Ruta Maya' Wilbur E. Garrett, ed., 424-78; 'Copan: A Royal Maya Tomb Discovered' Ricardo Agurcia Fasquelle and Wilham L. Fash, Jr., 481-86; 'City of Kings and Commoners: Copan,' George E. Stuart, 488-504.
6. In this context, *preyed* is intended to mean group thought focused toward The Great Mystery or Great Spirit actively imagining the 'state of being' their reality should assume or become. The English word prayer is the closest equivalent that conveys the spiritual sense of this activity, but the word itself carries broader implications for American Indians than those perceived by Euro-Americans. For example, The Great Mystery contains not only The Maker but all Spirit Being everywhere - as well as the concrete or solid substance of the universe from which everything occurs or comes into being.
7. Weigand 1978, 110 states that 'Ceremonialism still accompanies the planting of cotton and gourd and tobacco seeds and the act of sowing,

though the rites [for the above-named crops] are no longer well remembered or even generally practised. Ceremonialism for corn and squash is very well developed and central to the rainy/dry season dichotomy in the Huichol calendar.'

8. Brandon 1974, 138. Another example of this practice exists in the Southwest among the Pueblo peoples. Brandon notes that 'the women were expected to make a social bee of the never ending community work of grinding corn, and the right way of doing things also demanded a man at the door of the grinding room, playing the grinding song on a flute.' As sensitive and accurate as Brandon is about recounting the histories and customs of several hundred North American Tribes in this work, his own Euro-American bias ('cultural hypnosis' to restate Harman) is immediately apparent in his assumption that 'the women were *expected* to' do this or that. He also says '*demanded* a man at the door,' which is a bit strong to describe the communal participation that takes place in preparing cornmeal. In the pueblo I come from, the women organise all the women's activities and the men tend to their own duties, but when a community activity is taking place, both genders assist each other to make the 'chores' more pleasant.

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