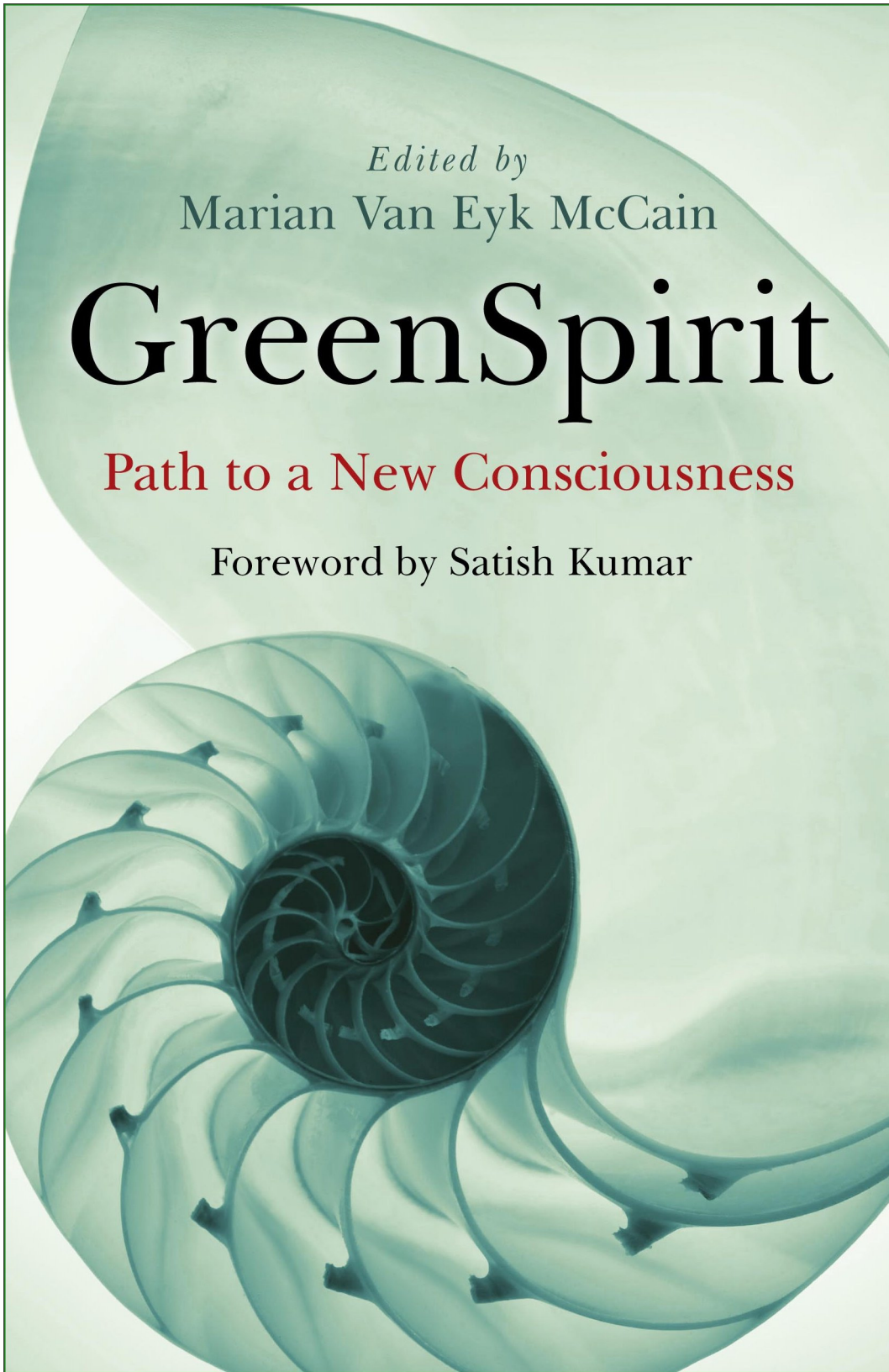


Edited by
Marian Van Eyk McCain

GreenSpirit

Path to a New Consciousness

Foreword by Satish Kumar



Some short extracts from this exciting new book, which some people are already calling '*the definitive guide to green spirituality.*'

“ ‘GreenSpirit: Path to a New Consciousness’ offers numerous healing and inspiring insights; notably, that Earth and the universe are primary divine Revelation, a truth to be transmitted to our children as early and effectively as possible.”
- **Thomas Berry** (January 2009)

“This is a book for anyone who hungers for a spirituality relevant to our times.”
-**Chris Johnstone**, author of *Find Your Power*

“A valuable guide to some of the deepest thinking on the connections between ecology and spirituality. Never before have so many important ideas on these subjects been assembled between the covers of a single book.”
-**Rupert Sheldrake, Ph.D.**, biologist and author of *A New Science of Life*

“Think of ‘GreenSpirit’ as a vade mecum, namely, those insightful books of guidance known in all the traditions that fit in the pocket and ‘went with a person’ in the walk through life as a summary of wisdom teachings. GreenSpirit certainly aims to ‘walk the talk,’ and, while doing so, provides that good companion we all hope to find.”
- **John Grim**, Co-Director, Forum on Religion and Ecology, Yale University

“A very different world awaits us. Old norms are evaporating; new realities are taking hold. Navigating the most profound transition in the history of humankind will require extraordinary resourcefulness - with a far greater emphasis on spirituality than ever before. ‘GreenSpirit’ celebrates the diversity and creativity of many of those shaping that greener consciousness.”
- **Jonathon Porritt**, Founder Director, Forum for the Future; Chairman, UK Sustainable Development Commission

“ ‘GreenSpirit’ speaks to the heart. It beckons us into birthing a new consciousness and culture. Experienced practitioners and thinkers explore here the groundbreaking shift from anthropocentric to ecocentric ways of thinking and living.. May this treasure trove of a book with its words of wisdom and beauty, and its helpful practical advice, reach many people and guide them into simpler, more meaningful ways of living within the great community of Life.”
- **Ursula King**, Professor Emerita of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Bristol.

“ ‘GreenSpirit’, with contributions from a host of artisans of cultural transformation, skillfully interweaves the strands of our new story, a new consciousness, renewed cultures, and our path to becoming fully human. Marian Van Eyk McCain has crafted an insightful and wide-ranging handbook to the promises and potentials of this new century.
- **Bill Plotkin, Ph.D.**, author of *Soulcraft* and *Nature and the Human Soul*

“How will we humans change our thinking and our behaviour to bring our technologies and lifestyles into harmony with the biological constraints of Earthly existence? Since our thinking and behaviour are underpinned by our spiritual beliefs and understandings, I believe that what we need is a spiritual revolution. And this book is part of exactly the kind of revolution that we need.”
-**John Seed**, Founder and Director of the Rainforest Information Centre.

“To address the many social and environmental crises we face today, we urgently need holistic, human-scale solutions. ‘GreenSpirit’ is an inspiring call to reconnect our minds and hearts with practical, grassroots action. “
- **Helena Norberg-Hodge**, Founder and Director of the International Society for Ecology and Culture.

GreenSpirit: Path to a New Consciousness

Marian Van Eyk McCain (Editor)
with a Foreword by Satish Kumar

Illustrations by Jenny Johnson

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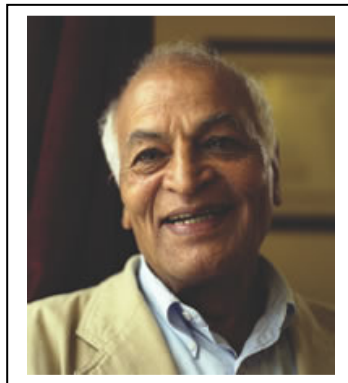
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From the Foreword

“..... GreenSpirit is a movement as well as a philosophy. It brings East and West together. Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism hold a spiritual view of nature. They believe in the unity of all life; human and non-human life are made of the same existential reality, we are all connected, we are all related, there is no separation, there is no dualism. The American Indians, the aboriginal culture of Australia and other indigenous traditions have a similar world view: Nature does not belong to humans, humans belong to Nature, humans *are* Nature, there is no distinction.

For me, God is not a person who created the world in six days in a historical time and then disappeared behind the clouds somewhere away from this world and left us to our fate. For me, God is not a creator in the past. The creator and creation are a continuous process and this process in itself is God. Nature is God. Hindus call creation the Dance of Shiva; the dance and the dancer cannot be separated. We are all dancers and we are the dance; we are all creators and also the creation.

Nature is sacred, Nature is intelligent, Nature is alive. All life has intrinsic value and has a right to live. From this perspective, Deep Ecology and GreenSpirit share a common ground.

I am delighted that Marian Van Eyk McCain has brought many strands of ecology, spirituality and wholeness together. Her book *GreenSpirit: Path to a New Consciousness*, is like Ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arrangement. The essays brought together in this book represent many shapes, colors, forms; they are like beautiful flowers, beautifully composed. I am confident that the book will act like a guide to many who are seeking a right relationship between the human spirit and the natural world.”

Satish Kumar



From the Introduction ...

“... the book is divided into four parts. In the first, entitled ‘Understanding,’ we shall be looking at the various threads which have created the weave we call GreenSpirit. The first is cosmology. In describing this, we shall be drawing on the work of Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme, co-authors of *The Universe Story*, that masterful telling of the tale of our existence, from the ‘Big Bang’ onwards.

Another major thread is Creation Spirituality. In other words, a spirituality centered on the beauty and mystery of the world we see around us, rather than on some imaginal realm of gods and angels. Here we shall be turning to the thought and writings of Matthew Fox, the iconoclastic Christian priest who became unpopular with the Roman Catholic church for his insistence that the concept of ‘original sin’ needed to be replaced by one of ‘original blessing’ and who eventually left that church to become an Episcopalian instead.

A third thread is the thread of Deep Ecology: a way of appreciating the Earth and all its life forms by acknowledging their intrinsic value, as opposed to measuring their value on the basis of their usefulness—or otherwise—to human beings.

Then there is Gaia Theory: the discovery that our planet Earth, far from being merely a lifeless rock with a thin covering of air and water and life clinging to it like lichen on a stone, displays all the attributes of a living organism, including the ability to self-regulate.

Lastly, there is Ecopsychology. This is a way of understanding ourselves and our psyches in terms of our relationship with Nature, both around us and, just as importantly, within us.

In the second part of the book, ‘Spiritual Pathways,’ we examine the ways in which all these ideas fit together with some of the traditional religions and how each of those may be practiced from a GreenSpirit orientation.

Part III, ‘Greening Our Culture,’ is concerned with how we might bring—and indeed are already beginning to bring—GreenSpirit thinking to bear on the different institutions and sectors of human society, such as law, medicine, education, politics, economics, design and so on.

Finally, in Part IV, ‘Walking our Talk,’ we discuss the practicalities of living a GreenSpirit lifestyle. This is a lifestyle in which ecologically-minded behaviors such as simple living, ‘downshifting,’ recycling, frugality and so on all flow from a pure

and boundless love of the Earth rather than from fear or because some individual, institution or government tells us it is the right thing to do.

We look at the history of GreenSpirit as an organization, what it provides for its members now and how the reader may link up with the services and opportunities it provides for people who wish to become part of our ever-widening spiritual community. Like planets in a solar system, this is a community which in turn is part of a larger one, in a web of relationships that spans the globe. Here, as we listen to people describing their experiences of GreenSpirit, it becomes clear how well and how satisfyingly it stands alone as a form of spirituality that lacks nothing and requires no compromise, no translation of language and no special props or dedicated buildings.

You will hear many voices in this book. Some of the contributors are already well-known names, some not so well-known. A number of the essays included here are extracts from longer works or are transcripts of talks given at GreenSpirit events over recent years. Some are adapted from writings previously published in the GreenSpirit Journal or in the form of booklets printed by GreenSpirit Books. Some of the work is brand new and written especially for this book. Together, this collection of writings presents, for the first time in one volume, a comprehensive picture of GreenSpirit both as an organization and as a philosophy of life. From these pages you will discover what GreenSpirit is, what it stands for and how it can provide a way out of our current dilemmas and into a joyous, sustainable, peaceful and harmonious future.”

Understanding the world and our place in it

1. Seeing Things Differently ...Grace Blindell

Our journey towards understanding

“Throughout the brief span that the human species has been upon this beautiful planet our interpretation of our relationship with the natural world – the animals, plants, trees, the elements of wind, water, air and earth, as well as the sun, moon and stars – has shifted, both consciously and unconsciously. Running parallel has been humankind’s developing and shifting attempts to define, explain and understand the great mystery of Creation itself....”

...The aim of this chapter is to put GreenSpirit in its context within the natural progression of human awareness ... One of the great ‘certainties’ that underlies the new, wider vision that inspires GreenSpirit is its embrace of the Whole. Both the evolving human understanding together with the evolving natural world are seen as an ongoing but unfinished journey, our ‘enlightenment’ today a part of an ongoing and unfolding Universe....”

(This important chapter is adapted from Grace’s booklet ‘What is Creation Centred Spirituality?’ published by GreenSpirit books in 2001.)

TOWARDS SEEING DIFFERENTLY.

I shall lure myself into this new way

Slowly, subtly,

And with cunning.

I shall take myself by surprise

And trick myself towards

That teasing boundary

One way or another.

Too long have I lived

This side of the frontier

Kow-towing to the Single Straight Line,

Whilst over there

Flutter the many-dimensional

Butterflies of paradox.

I shall walk daily

Along that tremulous meridian

And learn . . .

I shall lay my ear

To the pulse-beat of the planet

And know. . .

I shall dwell

Within the inner and outer together

And see . . .

That my end is my beginning,

That all things are connected,

That there is no longer

I and Thou,

Nor I and It,

Only the One.

2. Gaia Theory and Deep Ecology



“The word ‘ecology’ originates from the science of biology, where it is used to refer to the ways in which living things interact with each other and with their surroundings. Ecologists go out in the field to quantify nature, to break it down into numbers which are then placed in computers to tease apart the complex inter-relationships in the living world...

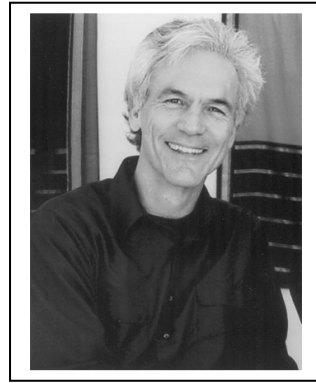
..These activities are supported and justified by the concept that our universe is a machine, and therefore ultimately predictable and controllable by man...

..But running parallel to this mainstream mechanistic view has been another, increasingly marginalized view, that our universe is an organism, a living being. In this view, the ‘machine’ description of our world is considered inadequate when applied to living things. It is quite clear that machines don’t arise from eggs or seeds, that they don’t rebuild their own parts right down to the molecular level, nor can they convert fuel into their own substance, as living beings do. The human heart, for instance, acts like a pump, but unlike a man-made machine, it is a pump that grows and repairs itself....

The Deep Ecology Platform

1. All life has value in itself, independent of its usefulness to humans.
2. Richness and diversity contribute to life’s well-being and have value in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs in a responsible way.
4. The impact of humans in the world is excessive and rapidly getting worse.
5. Human lifestyles and population are key elements of this impact.
6. The diversity of life, including cultures, can flourish only with reduced human impact.
7. Basic ideological, political, economic and technological structures must therefore change.
8. Those who accept the foregoing points have an obligation to participate in implementing the necessary changes and to do so peacefully and democratically.”

In this chapter, Stephan provides excellent and easy-to-understand explanations of Gaia Theory and Deep Ecology.



3. What Are Humans For? ... Brian Swimme

“... is it possible that we have a fundamentally mistaken orientation to the Universe and to what it means to be human in the Universe? Is it possible we’ve made a fundamental mistake and our way forward includes at least, in part, reflection on this cosmological or primordial question: what’s the nature of the Universe? What’s our role in the Universe? ...

...Here’s my suggestion. In terms of thinking about how we move forward my first suggestion for you is that we need to find ways of contacting the universe. When I say universe, unfortunately there is a connotation of vast, vast, far away galaxies and so forth. I mean universe as anything around us. Everything in the universe is infinite and intimate, both. Therefore there is a way in which the immensities of the universe are also intimate, intricate, immense, vast, everything, no matter what we look at. So it is this first step. We are living inside a civilization that has surrounded us with artifice, contraptions, commodities, stuffed garages, useless superficial distractions. That is where we live, in this web. So the first step is this. Find a way to contact the primordial powers of the universe as they appear in the wind or in the flower or in the sunshine. Find a way to contact with the hope *simply of a moment of astonishment*. Maybe the role of the human depends upon such moments.

The universe is just chock full of creative potentiality and creativity. There are fires of creativity everywhere and it’s not that we have to somehow learn to be creative; everything that *is*, is creative. It’s that we have to learn to participate with the creativity that is at the base of all matter.

When I was studying galaxies, 20 years ago, one of my professors made a statement that told me something very, very important. We were looking at the elegance of the galaxies. One of the images is to imagine all the universe as all these particles and then the galaxies come fluttering into existence—100,000,000,000 snowflake-like galaxies flutter into existence. That process is so elegant we couldn’t articulate it, we couldn’t even speak it with our mathematics. And so the professor said, “Well, if there are no galaxies in the universe that would be really easy for us to explain.” And I thought *well then if you use the word ‘intelligent’ what does it best describe?* What connotations come to mind when you think of the word ‘intelligent’—Einstein, Mozart? Sure. But shouldn’t ‘intelligent’ be used to describe a universe that can create 100,000,000,000 galaxies? Or should it be used just for the humans who can’t yet figure out how the universe did this?”

(This inspirational chapter is based on a talk that Brian gave in London in 2003)



4. Falling in Love with Gaia ... Susan Meeker-Lowry

“My personal introduction to the Gaia Hypothesis was in November 1985. It was my second visit to the Chinook Learning Center, an intentional community and educational center on Whidbey Island in Washington State, USA, founded by former residents of Findhorn. I was participating in Chinook’s conference, ‘For the Life of the Earth,’ to learn about new projects and to share ideas.

I arrived a bit late for the first gathering on Friday evening and Thomas Berry, author, priest, and cultural historian, had just started speaking. His eyes twinkled with good humor and he was full of energy and passion as he spoke of the importance of integrating ecology and spirit into politics, economics...and everything else. His wasn’t simply an intellectual understanding of the topic. I could tell he felt the magic of the Earth in every cell of his body. It wasn’t just what he said, it was how he said it. I was entranced.

One of the topics he discussed was the Gaia Hypothesis. My heart immediately embraced the idea. As Thomas spoke, the pieces fell into place. He put words on what I’d known intuitively all my life. Tears came to my eyes, hope grew in my heart, and my mind reeled with the implications. I thought about the role love plays in the healing process, how it works miracles, speeding recovery from illness and nourishing the spirits of people and animals alike. ‘Healing the Earth’ was a common phrase, but it seemed so arrogant. How could we possibly heal the Earth? But, if the Earth is alive then love is an important part of the healing process. And if love is part of the healing process then we can make a difference. What we do and how we do it matters. We may be David acting against a powerful Goliath, but we have Gaia, a living being, on our side! Nothing has been the same for me since.

There are many books available designed to help us reconnect with Nature and our human nature as well. Some are intellectual and theoretical, others are experiential, and still others read more like stories. While I know it takes more than a book to change someone, I also know that a good book read at the right time can touch us and make a difference. Sometimes the right words—like Thomas Berry describing the Gaia Hypothesis all those years ago—help us articulate a feeling or confirm an intuition.

But our minds and intellects can take us only so far. To understand Gaia, to let her into our lives, we must fall in love with the Earth. It’s that simple. We must love the Earth with the same passion and concern and fierceness that we love our children, our parents, our lovers, our mates....”

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For comprehensive, up-to-date information about GreenSpirit as an organization, contact details for other countries, and a wealth of information and resources pertaining to green spirituality, please visit the GreenSpirit website: <http://www.greenspirit.org.uk>
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