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protection and restoration? Are products derived from non-sustainable practices ethically acceptable? Do religious communities and leaders have a responsibility to deliver rebuke to co-religionists who contribute to pollution and environmental destruction? And, how can we acknowledge natural resources as spiritual resources?

Naomi Steinberg

See *also*: Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front; Jewish Environmentalism in North America; Judaism; Waskow, Rabbi Arthur.

Regan, Tom – See Environmental Ethics; Radical Environmentalism.

P Re-Earthing

Awakening to the Earth

As I look back, I see two waves, spirit and the Earth, that have sculpted my life. Or are they perhaps just two sides of the same wave?

Spirit emerged from a life-transforming LSD session in London in 1972 which blasted me out of the life I had been living up till then, out of a failed marriage and my job as a systems engineer at IBM. Suddenly the life I had been living lost all its meaning and appeal and I followed an overwhelming urge to start afresh with a clean slate. The following year found me on the road in India for the first time, studying Tibetan meditation with Lama Yeshe and Zopa at Kopan monastery in Nepal and vipassana meditation with Goenka at the Burmese Vihar in Bodhi Gaya.

I arrived back in Australia in August 1973 after a five-year absence. The 1960s didn't really reach Australia until the early 1970s. Lots of young people went back to the land then, especially around the small town of Nimbin in northern New South Wales and I immediately gravitated there upon my return.

My friends and I started offering meditation retreats to the burgeoning New Age community, and by 1976 we had built the Forest Meditation Centre. Then, twenty of us bought 160 acres of forest nearby, sloping down to Tuntable Creek, and started Bodhi Farm. We dedicated ourselves to caretaking the meditation center, organic gardening, social action, and looking after each other. It was a beautiful time. Before a hole in the sky made us fear the sun, we worked naked in the gardens and bathed in the pure water of our creek. We planted fruit trees, delivered our own babies, and built our dwellings. We shared vehicles. One day a week we sat in silent meditation together, one day we met in council. My son Bodhi was the first born there in 1977, quickly followed by seven or eight

others, including two sets of twins, and so we became known in the district as Baby Farm.

My awakening to the Earth took place four or five miles from Bodhi Farm, at Terania Creek, in 1979, when a couple of hundred hippies staged what was, as far as I know, the first direct nonviolent action in defense of the rainforests anywhere in the world. This was the biggest turning point in my life. I think now that we were successful because we were so naive and innocent and unaware of precedents. A film from that period shows a policeman with a happy smile on his face sitting by the forest having his bald head massaged by a young hippie woman. Another shot shows a band of tie-dyed minstrels standing in front of a bulldozer in the rainforest singing songs of love and peace. People climbed high into the trees and lay on the ground in front of the dozers. Hundreds were arrested, but there was not a single incidence of violence.

Perhaps it was all the sitting in meditation. But I felt as if the rainforest could speak to me and was asking me to give it voice. It was as if I had been plucked from my human throne and suddenly found myself a commoner, a plain member of the biota as Aldo Leopold called it, with a burning desire to awaken humanity to the folly of sawing off the branch that we are sitting on, unraveling the biological fabric from which we too are woven. If we enter the rainforest and allow our energies to merge with the energies we find there, I found, a most profound change in consciousness takes place. As I wrote in *Thinking Like a Mountain* (a book I wrote with Joanna Macy, Arne Naess and Pat Fleming in 1986), I realized that our psyche is itself a part of the rainforests. "I am protecting the rain forest" becomes "I am part of the rainforest protecting myself. I am that part of the rainforest recently emerged into thinking."

It took a number of years, countless demonstrations, press conferences, leaflets, and many people willing to sit in front of bulldozers and go to jail. But eventually 70 percent of the people of New South Wales came to agree with us, and the government established a series of national parks. To protect the remaining rainforests in 1981 we formed an organization, the Rainforest Information Centre (RIC).

From the Rainforest Information Centre to Earth First!

In response to our success, however, Australian logging companies began to look offshore, and in 1983, community representatives from the Solomon Islands contacted RIC for aid in resisting the same logging companies we had fought, as well as Malaysian and Japanese companies. In the years that followed, RIC volunteers provided technical, financial, and political support to defend forests and communities in the South Pacific, Asia, South America, and Russia.

In 1981 North American poet Gary Snyder visited Australia and we took him for a walk through Terania Creek.

As he learned about our actions in defense of the rainforests he said he was reminded of a new group that had formed in the United States called "Earth First!" Armed with Gary's introduction I contacted Earth First! Founder Dave Foreman and was soon writing for their journal.

In 1984 I was invited by Earth First! activists to the U.S. With Foreman and another of Earth First!'s founders, Mike Roselle, we spent two months bouncing around in the back of an old Volkswagen bus, conducting "road show" performances made up of music and storytelling, promoting our biocentric vision and direct-action resistance to deforestation. We ended our tour in San Francisco at a venue where Gary Snyder read a poem about Terania Creek and Randy Hayes announced the formation of a new international organization, the Rainforest Action Network.

The years that followed were full of activity: direct action to save forests and wilderness, boycotts of Mitsubishi and other transnationals, support for indigenous people in their struggles. Yet it was clear that the planet could not be saved one forest at a time. For each forest we were able to spare, a hundred were lost. The Earth is not a rock with resources growing on it; the Earth is alive, and to try to protect it by preserving a tiny patch of wilderness here and there is something like trying to keep humans alive by preserving representative samples of skin here and there.

Consciousness Change and Re-Earthing Ritualizing

To protect the Earth, to protect ourselves, we had to change the way we saw both the Earth and ourselves. We had to change our consciousness. Unless we could address our underlying spiritual disease, no forests would be saved for long. But how, I wondered, are we to identify and understand the spiritual malaise that leaves modern humans so lonely and isolated and no longer able to hear the glad tidings of the Earth which is our home? How are we to heal the great loneliness of spirit that finds us unable to feel loyalty and gratitude to the soil, which has fed and nourished and supported us without pause for 4000 million years?

Searching for an answer, I turned to the indigenous people who lived more or less in harmony with the Earth for hundreds of thousands of years. When we look at indigenous cultures, we may notice that without exception ritual affirming and nurturing the sense of interconnectedness between people and nature plays a central role in the lives of these societies. This suggests that the tendency for a split to develop between humans and the rest of nature must be very strong. Why else would the need for such rituals be so universally perceived? It also suggests the direction we must search for the healing of the split: we need to reclaim the ritual and ceremony which were lost from our culture a long time ago, and to our amazement we find that this is incredibly easy to do. Working with the Buddhist activist Joanna Macy, we

developed a ritual to address our contemporary situation. The Council of All Beings, as we called it, began with mourning for what has been lost, the acknowledgement of rage and anger. Using guided visualization, movement, and dance, we reexperienced our entire evolutionary journey. We made masks to represent our animal allies and give voice to these voiceless ones, invoking the powers and knowledge of these other lifetimes to guide us in appropriate actions and empower us in our lives. We see that the pain of the Earth is our own pain and the fate of the Earth is our own fate.

The Council of All Beings was just the first of the "re-Earthing" rituals that we developed in the years that followed, searching for processes that resonated for modern humans while fulfilling the function that such ceremonies had done for all indigenous cultures without exception since the beginning of time.

In the Council of All Beings we remember to speak on behalf of the animals and plants and landscapes with whom we share the Earth. In another of our new processes, "The Timeline of Light," we recapitulate our entire evolutionary journey, the five billion years since the Earth was born and before that, the eight or nine billion years since the birth of the universe itself. When we enact this story as our very own creation myth, when we recall that every cell in our bodies is descended in an unbroken chain from the first cell that emerged on the Earth, then a wonderful new perspective opens up in our lives and a fierce loyalty for life may arise that cuts through the conditioning and habits that trap us, and empowerment may blossom to serve the Earth.

Staying Connected

It takes a certain discipline, of course, to stay connected, to continually hear the Earth's voice. For many years, it had been my custom to seek guidance from the Earth. I would lie down in the forest and cover myself in leaves and say, "Mother, I surrender to you," and then I would deliberately allow all my energies to sink into the Earth. In 1992, the instructions I received in response to my prayers and meditations changed, and from that point onward, all that I received went like this: "John, finish what you've started. Don't start anything new. Leave space for me, Gaia," Sometimes this message would come while I was sitting quietly in nature. At other times, at the end of a weekend workshop, the last exercise would be for each of the participants (including myself) to write a letter to themselves which started "dear (your name), this is your mother, Gaia," after that the instructions were just to keep writing without stopping, without thinking and just see what came out. Previously I had received all kinds of practical advice about projects to undertake, or new directions for my work. Now, this was all that came through: "John, finish what you've started. Don't start anything new. Leave space for me. Gaia." I felt that Gaia was telling me to take time to

seek deeper answers to my questions about how the perennial spiritual thirst of humanity could be aligned with the need to address the ecological crisis. It was time to purify myself. It was time to visit some of the projects that I had helped initiate and support but had never seen with my own eyes. It was time to visit my beloved India and weave once again the spiritual warp and ecological woof of my life.

With all the projects that were underway, it took me about three years to hand over the last pieces of my work and return to India, my spiritual home, in search of nourishment and vision. Meanwhile, all the psychological aches and pains, which had mysteriously vanished when my Earth service was all-consuming, now returned. I finally had time on my hands again.

So I returned to India in 1995 searching for some resolution to the spiritual crisis that had begun for me a few years earlier. I decided to spend some time with the 86-year-old Advaita teacher, Poonjaji. I was hoping that meditation and *satsang* dialogues with him would help me to understand the connection between my work to save the planet and spiritual work. I felt a great need to join my activist side with my contemplative side, and I hoped Poonjaji could help me. He had found enlightenment fifty years before as a disciple of Sri Ramana Maharshi, perhaps the greatest Hindu sage of his century, on the sacred mountain Arunachala in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

Poonjaji, or Papaji as he was affectionately known, had many Western devotees who believed that he was also a fully enlightened master. Some 200 of us from all over the world crowded the hall Satsang Bhavan four mornings a week. Behind him on the wall were portraits and photos of Ramana. We handed him letters (his hearing was failing) with our spiritual questions which he would read and answer. I was interested in exploring with Papaji the relationship between the human spiritual quest and the ailing Earth. I had been wondering how, as long as people look on the Earth as *maya*, illusion, and as an obstacle to realization, as is generally the case in religions originating in the East, we could find the intense spiritual will necessary to make the tremendous changes in our values, lifestyles, and institutions, and in our very consciousness, that would prevent the continued destruction of the Earth?

Lucknow seemed an unlikely place to search for enlightenment. Noisy, highly polluted, and hardly conducive to a spiritual quest. Still, some of my closest friends had reported that a great opportunity existed there while this great sage was alive. There I would hang out with the other seekers, listening to stories from people from around the world. Once I visited the sad remnants of a forest nearby and prayed for direction, for renewal, for Gaia to call me once again, but I felt frustrated and full of doubt.

I found myself fascinated by Shiva, the Hindu god of creation and destruction, and tried to find out as much

about him as possible. For Shivaratri, the anniversary of Shiva's wedding, I caught the train to Varanasi where that wedding had taken place. Millions of pilgrims crowded the festive city, and I watched the *naga babas* naked, ash-covered, dreadlocked *sadhus* carry their tridents down to the Ganges to purify themselves.

While there I came across an interview with Vandana Shiva, the Indian feminist ecologist and writer, who spoke about the river goddess Ganga and Shiva. She said that the power of the goddess was so strong that if she landed on Earth she would just destroy. It is symbolic of the way we get our monsoon rain. It comes so strong, that if we don't have forest cover, we get landslides and floods. So the god Shiva had to help in getting the Ganges down to Earth. And Shiva laid out his hair, which was very matted, to break the force of the descent of the Ganga. Shiva's hair, Vandana concluded, is seen by many in India as a metaphor for the vegetation and forests of the Himalayas.

When I returned to Lucknow three days later, I wrote to Papaji twice about these concerns. The first time his answer was mostly mysterious to me and left me unsatisfied. So I plucked up my courage and wrote again a couple of weeks later:

Dear Papaji, Lakshmana Swami once said that, since God had chosen to manifest as the world and everything in it, one could worship God by having respect for the world and all the life forms it contains.

For many, many years, Papaji, it has been my privilege and joy to worship God in this manner, to feel the living Earth play my life like a musical instrument. A couple of weeks ago, when I first wrote to you at *satsang*, you said this: "To the man speaking of Mother Earth I say: To help Mother Earth means you stand and shout at the top of your lungs."

I have shouted long and hard, Papa. I shouted in front of bulldozers and was thrown in jail. I made films and a book, which was translated into 10 languages, and conducted workshops around the world, donating the proceeds to the work, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for the protection of Nature from the Amazon to New Guinea.

For the last 15 years Papa, the Earth worked through me and I was tireless and full of joy, but eventually the impurities of ego and the conditioned mind began to rise again until, a couple of years ago, the Earth asked me to hand over what I had been doing to others and purify myself for the next task that she has for me. And here I am.

This time Papaji looked directly at me and said in his deep voice:

When you take care of your mother then you will get

some prize. When you are helping the Earth, then you are helping everybody who's living on the Earth – plants, animals, and men. And now you have a reward: that the work will carry on. You may now sit quiet, and she will give you something in the way of peace. So, my dear friend your work is very good. I bless you for this task that is in hand, and let me tell you, both sides can happen simultaneously: Work for the good of the Earth and the people. And for your own good do something else. They needn't interfere with each other. Stay for some time before sleep and in the morning and sit quietly for five or 10 minutes. The rest of the time you may give for the world, help those who need your help.

What a blessing it was to feel Papa rekindle the flame inside me which had been wavering and doubtful. I could not yet know how, but I knew that from this turning point it would begin to flare forth once more.

And indeed, over the following years my work was renewed: fundraising on behalf of activists and cutting-edge projects around the world; in Ecuador to protect the Amazon headwaters from the ravages of the oil industry; a film I produced with David Attenborough and Olivia Newton-John to help protect the endangered forest species on New South Wales and the reforestation of Arunachala.

Shiva's Mountain

My retreat with Papaji was drawing to a close, but there was still one place I had to visit: the great mountain Arunachala, in Tiruvanamalai, 18 hours south by train.

Nearly ten years before, in 1987, I had received a letter from Apeetha Arunagiri, an Australian nun residing in the Sri Ramana Ashram at the foot of Arunachala. She wrote that when Ramana had arrived there, the holy mountain was clothed in lush forest and one might even meet a tiger walking on its flanks. Now little grew there but thorns and goats. Terrible erosion trenched Shiva's sides, and torrents of mud attended each monsoon. She had heard about our work for the forests. Could we please help her to reclothe the sacred mountain?

I had composed a reply to Apeetha, encouraging her in her efforts but pleading that we had no competence in reforestation or the rehabilitation of degraded landscapes – our mission was the protection of intact ecosystems. But it was no use, I couldn't send the letter. Ramana's smiling face, which I had first seen smiling from the back of his book *Who Am I?* in London in 1970, kept popping up before me. So we raised some money and sent it to Apeetha. Through her efforts a local NGO was born, the Annamalai Reforestation Society. The following summer solstice I was facilitating a Council of All Beings workshop at John Button's shack at Sundari community in northern New South Wales. John was a permaculture designer and

tree-planter who was heading for the deserts of central Australia to become involved in a tree-planting project. For some reason I asked him if he would like to try this in the deserts of Tamil Nadu instead. He asked for details, and when I mentioned Ramana, his face turned pale and he told me that he was a long-time devotee of Ramana.

Since that time, John and his partner, Heather Bache, helped organize the rehabilitation of Arunachala. The space between the inner and outer walls of the vast 23-acre temple complex has been transformed from a wasteland into the largest tree nursery in the south of India. Hundreds of people had received environmental education, and a 12-acre patch of semi-desert was donated to the project and transformed into a lush demonstration of permaculture and the miraculous recuperative powers of the Earth.

Hundreds of Tamil people have now been trained in reforestation skills – tree identification, seed collection, nursery techniques, watershed management, erosion control, sustainable energy systems. Shiva's robes are slowly being rewoven. Furthermore, hundreds more have been trained in the techniques of permaculture, inspired by the Annamalai Reforestation Society's model farm.

The train finally rolled into Tiruvanamalai and I was able to visit Arunachala myself and see the tremendous work that had been done to revegetate the sacred mountain. Upon my arrival I discovered that many people there believe that to walk around the base of Arunachala is the fastest way to enlightenment. Each full moon, tens or hundreds of thousands of devotees and pilgrims do so. It upset me to see the indifference with which most of these folks regarded our work. Most were oblivious, but some even complained that the newly planted trees interfered with their view of the sunset. A great deal had been accomplished by the Annamalai Reforestation Society, but how much more could be achieved if only the pilgrims would realize the unity of the spirit and the Earth!

What if their worship of Shiva included devotion to his physical body, Arunachala? Imagine if they lent a hand to the planting and maintenance of the trees as part of their devotion? The greening of the mountain would be accelerated. I was giving talks and lectures in the town and I began to challenge the ecological indifference I found and to propose to the pilgrims that surely the act of worship and respect of watering the young saplings that were weaving themselves into robes to cover his nakedness was an even faster route to liberation than circumambulating the mountain.

A week later I was stricken with remorse. How could I be so presumptuous as to make such claims without having even asked Shiva? So one morning I climbed the mountain and found a quiet place among the trees to meditate and pray and apologize. After some time I opened my eyes to a noise. Some monkeys had appeared from the young forest. Slowly they filed past and stood

guard while scores of their tribe came into view, and then they began to relax.

They groomed each other, they made love, mothers breast-fed their babies, children played and cavorted, utterly unself-consciously living their everyday lives in my astonished and grateful presence. I saw a new-born infant cautiously explore the ground, leaving the safety of her mother's body for what seemed to me the first time, and leaping back and climbing her fur at the slightest noise or disturbance. I had never felt more accepted by the nonhuman world. I knew that Shiva had answered my prayer, had acknowledged my efforts, and was giving me his sign of approval.

It doesn't really matter what symbols we use – Shiva, Gaia, Buddha, God. What we need now is for the followers of all faiths to turn their allegiance to the Earth. What matters is that we refuse to be drawn to one or the other of the great polarities: spirit and Earth. We must neither reduce everything to spirit, from where it appears that the material world is some kind of illusion, nor reduce everything to the material, so that it looks as if spiritual seekers are abdicating responsibility to care for the creation.

John Seed

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- See also: Biocentric Religion – A Call for; Council of All

Beings; Deep Ecology; Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front; Entheogens; Epic of Evolution; Hopiland to the Rainforest Action Network; Macy, Joanna; Paganism – Contemporary; Psychonauts; Radical Environmentalism; Seed, John; Shiva, Vandana; Snyder, Gary.

Reichel-Dolmatoff, Gerardo (1912–1994) – and Ethnoecology in Colombia

Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, anthropologist, ethnographer, archeologist, ethnoecologist, ethnohistorian and ethnoastronomist, carried out extensive research in Colombia (South America) among the Amerindians of the Amazon (Vaupes), Caribbean coast (Uraba, Guajira, Sierra Nevada), Pacific Coast (Choco), Andean and inter-Andean areas, and in the savannah area of the Llanos.

Reichel-Dolmatoff was one of the founders of Colombian anthropology and archeology. As an ethnographer he lived for decades among indigenous peoples and was a staunch defender of Amerindian peoples. The author of over 20 books and 300 articles on prehistoric and contemporary Amerindians, Reichel-Dolmatoff also was a member of scientific institutions such as the National Academy of Sciences of the United States, the Academy of Sciences of Colombia, the Third World Academy of Sciences, and the Linnean Society of London, among others.

Reichel-Dolmatoff's anthropological work contains detailed ethnographies on dozens of Amerindian cultures and contributes significant theories and methodologies. For example, he analyzed indigenous shamanism, cosmologies and worldviews as templates for socio-environmental analysis and conservation, and related these to specific religious systems, modes of subsistence, socio-political structures, medicine, art, philosophies, and ethics that are used by communities to achieve long-term environmental and social well-being. He largely documented this among the Tukano Indians of the Northwest Amazon (Vaupes) and among the Kogi Indians of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta on the Caribbean coast.

Reichel-Dolmatoff pioneered archeological research in many Colombian regions and produced the first interpretive overviews of the millenarian cultural evolution of Colombia. He discovered, among others, early formative sites in the Caribbean area, which documented the (then) most ancient pottery of the Americas that was related to the origins of sedentary subsistence and agriculture tribal societies 6000 years ago.

In addition, he analyzed the symbolism of material culture, and particularly of goldwork, crystals, basketry, ceremonial items, and vernacular architecture – such as the Amazon *maloca* communal longhouse or the Kogi temple – advancing new theories on the shamanism and the cosmologies underlying such objects and artifacts of memory. His work emphasized the great values of