

A [sample entry](#) from the

Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature

(London & New York: Continuum, 2005)

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Southwest, attracting close to five million visitors annually, and into one of the most expensive places to live in the country, with several environmental conflicts resulting from pressures of development, sewage, land use, and related issues. Sedona's New Age popularity may ultimately not save it from the "Aspenization" or "Californication" that has become the trap of many a picturesque town in the American "new west."

Adrian Ivakhiv

Further Reading

Ivakhiv, Adrian. *Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001.

See also: Delphic Oracle; Earth Mysteries; Glastonbury; New Age; Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Seed, John (1945–)

John Seed is an Australian environmental activist who, along with Joanna Macy, has done more than any other figure to spread globally deep ecology spirituality and ritual. Motivated in part by long-standing Buddhist practice, in his native Australia he founded the Rainforest Information Centre in 1979 (and by 1984 the World Rainforest Report). In subsequent years, while he has continued political work to protect forests and forest peoples, he has increasingly prioritized his spiritual work. He believes that the environmental crisis is so grave that only a miracle can save the Earth and that a prerequisite for this is the complete transformation of human consciousness along deep ecological lines. Given this conviction, he has put a high priority on creating and teaching ritual forms that evoke in participants a perception of the sacredness of the Earth and feelings of kinship and moral responsibility toward the entire community of life.

Born in 1945 in Budapest Hungary, Seed arrived in Australia at the age of five and recalls that the bushland and coastline around Sydney laid the foundations for his later love of nature. From 1973 to 1979 he steeped himself in Buddhist meditation and helped build a meditation center and community in the bush of northern New South Wales. After withdrawing to the forest, however, the deforestation sweeping the world found him, and he participated in direct-action campaigns in the Nightcap Range NSW (1979–1981), Franklin River Tasmania (1983–1984) and Cape Tribulation Queensland (1985–1986). Each of these campaigns led to the protection of rainforests and the creation of national parks that eventually received World Heritage listing.

In 1980 Seed met bioregionalist Gary Snyder who was reading poetry in Australia. Snyder mentioned to him the recently formed Earth First! movement in the United

States, which was also involved in civil disobedience to save forests. Seed hooked up with these activists and during the summers of 1984 and 1985 started doing "road show" performances with Earth First! co-founders Dave Forman and Mike Roselle in the U.S. These performances used songs, slide shows, and lectures, to spread deep ecology spirituality and build direct-action ecological resistance in the U.S. (Seed is an accomplished song writer who has produced several albums of environmental and children's songs.) Seed and Roselle would help Randy Hayes invent the Rainforest Action Network in 1984, which quickly established itself as one of the world's most important environmental non-governmental organizations.

In 1987 Seed co-produced a television documentary for Australian national television about the struggle for the rainforests, which was subsequently shown in many countries around the world. Shortly thereafter he pioneered a number of important projects to protect rainforests in South America, Asia and the Pacific. One of the earliest and most innovative was in Papua New Guinea, providing portable "Wokabout sawmills" to indigenous peoples as a means to conduct sustainable tree harvesting. This was seen as a way to resist deforestation by showing forest peoples an alternative to industrial forestry, which destroys cultural and natural diversity. By the turn of the century he was investing a great deal of time in Ecuador, helping to establish and demarcate forest reserves there, both to protect their ecological integrity and the forest peoples who depend on them. Religious and spiritual organizations, including The Australian Council of Churches and the Foundation for Deep Ecology, have supported his work.

Seed is the source of an aphorism now commonly expressed in radical environmental circles, "I am the forest, recently emerged into consciousness, defending myself," a perception that first came to him while engaged in direct-action resistance to logging, when he felt himself "no longer acting on behalf of myself or my human ideas, but on behalf of the Earth . . . I was literally part of the rainforest defending herself" (Seed, et al. 1998: 6). But Seed is probably best known for helping create and widely disseminating the Council of All Beings. He has also developed "Re-Earthing" and other workshops that can be considered Earth-revering rituals. The Re-earthing workshops draw on breathwork practices grounded in Yoga and other religious traditions originating in India. Other rituals, including some that are often used as preliminary exercises in the Council of All Beings, consecrate cosmological and evolutionary narratives; such ritualizing has affinities with the Epic of Evolution and draws on the work of Thomas Berry.

Seed has conducted such rituals and trained others to do so widely, not only in his native Australia and the U.S., but also throughout Western Europe, Poland, Russia,

Slovakia, Mongolia, India, Thailand, Japan, Chile, Ecuador, and Canada. This work has spawned environmental protection groups and projects including the Anammalai Reforestation Society in Tamil Nadu, India which has been engaged since the late 1980s in the reforestation of the sacred mountain Arunachala.

Seed often teaches at intercultural enclaves or spiritual retreat centers such as the California Institute of Integral Studies, the Esalen Institute and Omega Institute (Rhinebeck, New York), Findhorn, Naropa University, and Schumacher College. He also lectures widely at mainstream universities in the U.S., Australia, Europe, and Asia. Awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 1985 by the Australian Government for his conservation efforts, in 2003 he has been writing and producing videos, including *On the Brink*, which captures well the apocalyptic expectation which, combined with his deep ecological spirituality, fuels his passionate Earth activism.

Bron Taylor

Further Reading

Seed, John, Joanna Macy, Pat Fleming and Arne Naess.

Thinking Like a Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings. Philadelphia, PA: New Society, 1988.

See also: Berry, Thomas; California Institute of Integral Studies; Council of All Beings; Deep Ecology; Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front; Epic of Evolution (and adjacent, Epic Ritual); Esalen Institute; Findhorn Foundation/Community (Scotland); Hopiland to the Rainforest Action Network; Hundredth Monkey; Macy, Joanna; Naess, Arne; Naropa University; Radical Environmentalism; Schumacher, Ernest Friedrich; Snyder, Gary.

Seeds in South Asia

In South Asia's predominantly agricultural society, seeds as the source of food and life are generative not only of economic and nutritional value, but also of multiple poetic and religious meanings. Seed imagery is pervasive in Hinduism's earliest sacred texts, and retains its importance into the current era. Actual seeds are present as auspicious offerings in numerous rituals of varied purpose; moreover, ritual actions surround farmers' practices of saving and planting seeds. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, conflicts have swirled around the production and marketing of seeds. These include issues of biodiversity versus monoculture; of local control versus multinational corporate production; and most recently of the economic and environmental benefits and hazards of genetically engineered seeds. Seeds thus retain potent symbolic value in multiple and changing contexts through millennia of South Asian history.

The common word for seed in Hindi and Sanskrit is *bij*

(or *bija*). From its earliest uses in ancient India this term encompassed a semantic domain similar to that of seed in English: its meanings range from the actual germ of plant life to human or animal semen, and expand to include any primary cause. Particular to Sanskrit usage, however, is the association of seed with the power of sound. *Bij mantra* denotes the mystical letter or syllable essential to an oral spell used to evoke a particular deity.

Hinduism's oldest scriptures, the *Vedas*, pose homologies among seed, milk and other potent substances including butter, and the nectar of immortality – homologies that persevere throughout later Sanskrit literature as well as in vernacular sources. In popular devotional oral traditions, a seed planted and sprouting is a common metaphor for religious knowledge that may come from a guru or the lord, and take root in the human heart.

Because of its close association with semen, seed as male is sometimes identified as part of a cultural complex that disadvantages women. Women may be likened to fields – giving nourishment and growth to seed, but having no great part to play in the final product – whether determining its form or possessing its fruits. However, some South Asian esoteric traditions, such as those of the Bengali Bauls, describe women's menstrual blood as "female seed" whose potency is equal to or greater than that of males. Both male and female seed may be ritually conserved to increase spiritual power and knowledge, or depleted through ordinary sexual intercourse to produce children.

A Sanskrit agricultural treatise called *Krishi-Parashara* prescribes a procedure for prayerfully sowing seeds in which, "The farmer with a pure and concentrated mind and after meditating upon Indra [the god of rain]," sows three handfuls of moist seeds on an auspicious day – thus ensuring prosperity in the future year (Bhattacharya 1976: 293–4). Farmers throughout India have traditionally performed similar rituals to initiate the planting season, before it is time to sow actual crops. In the wake of technological change in recent decades, these practices have waned.

Besides rituals explicitly incorporated into the agricultural work cycle, many other Hindu rites involve seeds. For example, in Rajasthan, the worship of the goddess Sitala Mother (who presides not only over rash and fever disease but over fertility of humans and farms), precedes the monsoon planting season by at least two months. All the women who participate in Sitala's worship on her festival day will go behind her shrine and plough miniature fields in the dirt with their fingers. In these fields they plant seeds for each of the coming season's crops, seeds that have been offered to, and blessed by, the goddess.

Folktales also associate seeds with divine female beings. In Bengali folklore, Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, comes disguised as an old woman and gives rice seeds to a poor widow, thus blessing her household with