

RAINFOREST and PSYCHE

by John Seed

I believe that contact with rainforests energises and enlivens a realisation of our ACTUAL, our biological self. They awaken in us the realisation that it was "I" that came to life when a bolt of lightning fertilized the chemical soup of 4.5 billion years ago; that "I" crawled out of Devonian seas and colonised the land; that, more recently, "I" advanced and retreated before four ages of ice.

We are composed of the ashes of ancient stars weaving themselves into ever more brilliant complexity, weaving themselves into rainforests, weaving themselves into US. I AM that!

Yes, our psyche is itself a product of the rainforests. We evolved for hundreds of millions of years within this moist green womb before emerging a scant five million years ago, blinking, into the light.

When we enter the rainforest we become acutely and PERSONALLY aware of the exquisite intelligence of Nature, holding millions of species in dynamic, evolving equilibrium.

In the light of these forests, our puny human intelligence becomes aware of itself as a mere fragment of this vast compassionate web. Our tiny, momentary life finds a true frame of reference there, against which our humanity can see itself. We realise the matrix within which (regardless of any arrogant fantasies we may have to the contrary) we are inextricably embedded.

The intelligence of the rainforest which gave rise to human beings (as well as the other myriad creatures) remains accessible to humans who choose to surrender to it. Unfortunately the thick insulation of social fictions that we call our "selves" may prevent us from recognising that we are just one leaf on the tree of life, just one strand in the vast biological fabric, incapable of independent existence.

We may then labour under various delusions like: the universe revolves around the earth, the world was created for our benefit, or that our relationship with the myriad creatures is to "subdue and dominate" them.

A few years ago, the Pulitzer prize winning eco-poet Gary Snyder was working for the then Governor of California Jerry Brown, An exasperated Brown said; "Gary, why is it that you're always going against the flow?" Snyder replied; "Jerry, what you call 'the flow' is but a 16,000 year eddy. I'm going with the ACTUAL flow."

Thinking like a rainforest!

If we enter a rainforest and allow our energies to merge with the energies that we find there, then the rainforest may be a place where our roots are able to penetrate through the soft soil reaching beyond the sad 16,000 year history and into the reality of our billions-of-years-of-carbon journey through the universe. Various truths which had been heretofore merely "scientific" become authentic, personal and, yes, spiritual. We may now penetrate to a truly deep ecology.

