

Inner Passages Outer Journeys (revised)

Wilderness Healing and the Discovery of Self

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Contents

- 1. A Lesson from the Hunter-Gatherers**
- 2. Inner Passage, Outer Journey; What's it to be?**
- 3. Wilderness Rapture and Healing in Nature**
- 4. Wilderness Truly Something Special**
- 5. Archetypes**
- 6. Opening the Heart**
- 7. Conclusion**
- 8. Appendix – Core Beliefs and Energy Systems**

Preface

Treks into some of the most remote areas on earth can be the best prescriptions for counteracting the burnout of modern life. Evidence suggests that time spent in the wilderness may be one of the most powerful ways to promote overall health and wellbeing. The book will tell you how to get the stress-reducing benefits of nature even if you cannot afford a major trip – just working in your backyard garden can help! “Wilderness rapture,” a consequence of “being” in nature in the right way is readily attainable by us all and this state can be profoundly healing for the psyche. Few of us will attain samadhi, satori, nirvana or similar enlightened states but we can achieve experiences of bliss if we immerse ourselves in the wild outdoors in the right way.

Psychoanalysis is about free association, dream interpretation, transference and a safe place to investigate our mental processes. We explore our unconscious, repression, resistance, and sexuality. Benefits can occur with psychotherapy but it is an expensive technique for therapeutic restoration. Wilderness is readily available, cheap and with its untamed majesty can induce a wilderness “effect” that can be even more healing than years of analysis. I have called this affect “Wilderness Rapture.”

In the U.S.A we have an abundant wilderness back-country but we are a nation dealing with mega stress. Few health care givers speak to our need for a healthy balance with our natural habitat. The traditional Western approach to the wilderness (taking RV’s tents, showers, cars, boats, jet skis etc. keep people away from experiencing the wilderness in a deep fashion. Putting as little as possible between us and the wild can open us to a more mindful way of being in nature, and to wilderness rapture.

Mother Earth is the supreme catalyst in this journey. Balancing the different approaches of left and right brain can help us access the feminine healing power in nature. If we are to restore ourselves deeply in the wilderness we have to leave dominating, male, "left brain" goal-oriented attitude at home and try a more intuitive, feminine, "right brain" approach. We can do this by paying attention to; archetypes, primal influences, signs, metaphors, fear and peak experiences. With the help of ancient philosophy we can get past our egos and stop trying to "conquer" nature by skiing faster, getting to the top of the mountain in record time, or obsessively taking photographs. With a different approach we can open to the magic of the wild by shifting awareness and balancing the outer journey with the inner one. Everyone intuitively understands the restorative power of nature. If we heighten our awareness and get ourselves out of the way self-transformation and wilderness rapture can occur. This can be so dramatic that participants find it difficult to return to the frenetic, high-stress lives they left behind. They often decide to make lifestyle changes, rearrange their priorities, or alter their approach to dealing with problems on their return.

This book about self-discovery in wilderness is a pragmatic distillation of various sources of information on the transformational and healing qualities of nature. It discusses the relevance of the San Bushman hunter-gatherers of the Kalahari to our wilderness experience, some important wisdom from wilderness and transpersonal psychology and teachings from ancient mystical traditions. For more details on the vital importance of core beliefs and energy systems refer to the web site. These can help us define a universal or core truth that we can carry with us on our trek to realize self. The principles apply as well to all those on any quest for self-actualization.

The multifaceted beauty of nature has the power to create what I have termed wilderness rapture. This unique feeling occurs when we draw nearer to our higher self or inner being. The text explains how to facilitate this experience.

For the purpose of clarity it has been necessary to make a clear demarcation between inner directed and an outer directed experiences, between inward bound and outward bound when they are not always readily distinguishable. The seeker's intention will determine whether the bias will be one way or the other. Often the motivation is primarily outward but nevertheless there is a significant inner effect; exposure to the elements and the diverse polarities that abound in the wild can create profound shifts in awareness. Those on the inward track may be forced to go outward because of a calamity or a crisis and may find this enlightening. Conversely there are modern day hunters who appear outwardly directed and fixated on a trophy but are mindful and meditative in their hunting techniques. There are mountaineers who seem totally resolute on attaining a peak but who connect with their true being while climbing. No matter which it is; inward or outward, inner directed or outer directed, left or right, light or dark, feminine or masculine, sun or moon; we need to balance the opposites to achieve wilderness rapture. When we focus on one polarity only we lose the magic and the ability to heal and restore ourselves.

To "achieve" is to be externally oriented but to attain deeper effects we need to let go of the attachment to accomplish anything. Goal orientation and rapture are mutually exclusive in the present moment. We begin with a goal but once the intention is set we need to let go of the possible outcome. This is the crux between balancing inner and outer. The ability to be in harmony with oneself and with nature is embodied in the model of the Bushmen. Although they have almost disappeared as hunter-gatherers their unique consciousness and their relationship

with the desert can be an inspiration to us when we go into the wilderness for healing and self-restoration.

A Lesson from the Hunter-Gatherers

“The spirit of man is nomad, his blood Bedouin, and love is the Aboriginal tracker on the faded desert spoor of his lost self; and so I came to live my life not by conscious plan or prearranged design but as someone following the flight of a bird.”

...Laurens van der Post

The Bushmen, or San, are one of the last Hunter Gatherers of Africa. The San have attracted various groups of people for different reasons. Anthropologists see them as a link to long lost stone age cultures and naturalists and hunters admire them for their extraordinary expertise in the bush. Those of a more mystical inclination are fascinated with their oneness with the fauna and flora of the Kalahari, a connection that has enabled them to survive for centuries in a desert that most other peoples have avoided. Through this, they previously remained free from the trappings and problems of more sophisticated societies.

Legends of the Bushmen abound. History tells us how they could not be tamed and how they were pushed further and further into the interior of Southern Africa by the northerly migration of the whites and southerly migration of the Bantu. Many stories are related of their cunning as hunters and trackers, of their botanical and medicinal skills, of their delicate rock art and their bravery. Their desire to be free was paramount and it was said that if you imprisoned a San, he would soon will himself to death in his cell. The San people are so much in the present moment that they are unable to conceive of a time in the future when things might be different and they could be free.

Physically, the San are quite different from other South African Bantu peoples. They are short of stature, have copper-colored skin, peppercorn hair and delicate facial features. They have slanting eyes and high cheek-bones. This has led to speculation as to the origin of these original indigenous people of Southern Africa, who origins go back at least 30,000 years.

The women often are exquisite and have a characteristic sign of steatopygia. This is an excess of fat accumulation in the buttocks, so that they project somewhat behind them. Buttocks are the most important part of the anatomy when it comes to sex appeal and, except on special occasions, always are covered. Some of these features are disappearing as the Bushman intermarry with their Bantu neighbors.

The women provide most of the food by foraging. They are outstanding botanists and, while walking at quite a pace can discern subtle changes in the shapeless Kalahari scrub denoting something edible. Out comes the ubiquitous digging stick, and within seconds a delectable morsel is thrown into the skin bag. Many of the roots, bulbs and tubers are quite deep underground and have to be uncovered a foot or more down. It is only deep under the surface of the earth that they can acquire enough moisture in which to grow. One to two hours later and five skin bags full and they return to camp with enough food for all.

All the men have with them for a hunting trip are a bow, a quiver of arrows, a digging stick, fire stick and a sipping straw to suck water out of hollow trees or from sip-wells in the sand. With these simple implements and their incredible knowledge of the desert they can survive indefinitely. Their back yard is their panty and their skills give them an enviable sense of freedom.

There are few landmarks in the Kalahari, and one thorn tree looks like another to the uninitiated. To the San, however, each area has a its own tale to tell. Their knowledge extends many miles beyond their encampments where they are just as familiar with the featureless terrain. It is nothing for them to walk 50 miles to visit friends and they are able to find plenty to eat along the way.

The San are extremely egalitarian. They had no chief or leader and everyone -- male and female -- has a say in the activities of the group. Certain members are known for their extraordinary skills such as hunting or healing, but this does not confer on them any additional privileges. Egomaniacal attitudes are not part of Bushman behavior.

Children would be considered thoroughly "spoiled" in our terms. When a child picks up a musical instrument, allowance is the rule, no matter how distracting the noise. Children rarely have a request refused, and no adult can bear to hear a child cry. The Kalahari desert is a cruel enough teacher, and the environment outside of home holds enough to teach youngsters to be responsible adults. Even amongst the adults, an unconditional positive regard for others seemed to be routine and it is difficult to find judgmental attitudes amongst the group.

Water was like a drug to the San, and wells put in by the Botswana government are among the factors that have put an end to their nomadic way of life. It is so much easier to turn on a faucet than to go and dig for tubers and look for Tsama melons, even if it means a walk of five miles or more. Plastic bottles have replaced empty ostrich egg shells as water containers. Previously these were filled with water from hollowed out tree trunks, using hollow reeds to suck the water up and spit it carefully back into the shell. These natural reservoirs were covered meticulously with a log or branch to prevent animals from drinking and polluting it. The Kalahari has no natural water and it rains infrequently. Before the advent of wells these people did not have water, yet adapted happily to the environment.

To get water they dig for the tuber, Baiee [Raphion Acme Burkei], grate it with a sharp stick and deliver the juice inside. To this are added one or two different plants to take away the bitterness and catalyze the release of more water, since an excessive volume can be squeezed from a modest amount of the shavings. Nothing is wasted, and they use the residue of the fibers to scrub and clean themselves

Except for a few hardy purists, the San tend to settle in close proximity to a well. Nevertheless, the skills for finding water remain and the San are adept in their use. However, future generations

growing up with water faucets may lose these skills. Dependency on the well means that women and men have to forage further and further afield for food, game and firewood. The San way of life had been predicated on their being transient. The presence of a well has become a strong deterrent to their nomadic way of life.

Many pressures threaten the San way of life besides the introduction of water on tap. Huge cattle ranches have appeared with fences that both limit game migration and inhibit their nomadic pattern. Cattle overgrazing is a problem with regard to the destruction of natural habitat and food to forage. Game preserves and hunting areas have been demarcated and the San are no longer welcome, even though their hunting needs are small and do not affect the ecology. The San hunter-gatherer is slowly disappearing since it is easier for them to assimilate with their Bantu neighbors around them.

Hunting is now a rare event, since little large game remains in the vicinity around their villages. Meat, is still occasionally available from small game because of the Sans' ingenious trapping ability. They now concentrate on the trapping of smaller antelope and birds especially the delicate duiker and steenbok, koraan and guinea fowl. Watching them set a trap is like a surgical exercise. They pay minute attention to detail, and trapping has become a work of practical art. Most astounding is the knowledge of the animals, as they "become" that animal, chatting away to each other and discussing all aspects of behavior and how best to set the trap. It seems uncanny that in this vast expanse of desert, they would be able to eat meat just because one buck placed one foot in a six-inch diameter spot somewhere in the vast Kalahari. It is not difficult to learn how to set a sloppy trap but it takes a lifetime to learn where to set it. Rope making is essential, since without it one cannot make a bow or snare. This basic skill is one of the easiest to learn. Rope was made from a small fibrous-like plant called "Gwi" (*Sanserveria*, also called mother-in-law's tongue), which is ubiquitous. Even a thin cord is extremely strong and difficult to break.

Hunting of bigger game is now impractical on foot for the San in terms of energy expenditure. The Bushmen have to walk long distances to find their quarry now that their hunting grounds are

encroached upon. The San will not expend more energy than they can get back from the exercise since, with water and food being so critical, this could become a life or death situation especially because of the intense heat.

Skinning of the animal is done quickly and efficiently on a table of broken branches in the sand. Nothing is wasted and the delicacies -- the heart, kidneys and liver -- are wrapped in the stomach and cooked in an ash oven or pot. These are the privileges of the hunter, and the rest is shared. In times of drought the San squeeze the liquid from the stomach contents for a drink. Survival in the Kalahari lays esthetics aside.

The poisonous grub of the diaphid beetle can be found a foot away from a particular commifora, bush and here they sometimes spend several hours digging. It is hard to imagine how the first San discovered that the innards of this grub were deadly when in contact with the blood stream. Perhaps it came to one of them in an altered state of consciousness during the "Trance Dance." The poison is a neurotoxin that paralyzes with a curare-like effect. The time it takes to kill depends on the size and weight of the prey and the San have been known to track a large wounded animal for a day or more.

Sinew is wound around the metal shaft of the arrowhead and the poison smeared onto it, with great care not to put any on the point of the arrow. A mere scratch could be fatal, and there is no antidote to the poison. It is easy to understand why the quiver is solid and made from a specialized piece of hollow bark. This is one activity the children are not allowed to share.

The San are small people, and their bows and arrows are toy- like. They do not rely on a fatal shot from afar, as their incredible tracking ability and stealth allow them a shot from up close. The poison takes care of the rest. The wooden body of the arrow is arranged cleverly to drop away from the poisoned metal shaft, which remains stuck in the flesh so the animal cannot dislodge it by rubbing up

against a tree. The poison is deactivated with heat, cooking and also by gastric juice. Poison on the arrow-heads is easily eliminated by placing them in the fire for a minute.

The Bushmen are master trackers. They can tell how many animals have passed by, which were male and female, their size and approximate time of arrival. Even if a track looks relatively recent, they will know if the animal has too much of a head start to be worth following.

The San have rudimentary shelters in which they rarely sleep except in the rare event of rain. The grass walls soon become a haven for the small creatures of the Kalahari, and every now and then have to be burned down and reconstructed. Kalahari nights are extraordinary, and everyone welcomes the release from the heat of the day. If one can find a group far away from the Bantu villages the Kalahari again feels untainted by the 21st century. When evening comes, the "veldkos" (veld food) is roasted in the ashes. After eating there is singing and dancing. San music is different from anything else one has ever heard and the haunting sounds of singing and clapping can easily propel one into an altered state of consciousness. Dancing is accompanied by the swishing sounds of ankle rattles the men wrap around their legs. Given the right energy and enough time at the dance, the San are able to trance and travel up to the spirit world. This is discussed in more detail later chapters.

The San spirit dance is a phenomenon that enables the healer to leave his or her body and do battle with the spirits for the restoration of the health of the patient. It also is known as the "Little Death," since the dancer is in danger of not returning to the body and has to be carefully watched. Trance dancers have been known to do remarkable things with fire, including putting parts of their anatomy in the flames without suffering burns. They are known for their psychic and healing abilities, and many Africans prefer to see a San healer than be treated by their own medicine person. There are many whites in the Kalahari who can testify to being cured by a San healer after Western medicine had failed them

These unique people seem to have found the balance we lack in our modern society and it is disturbing to hear visitors say that they find the San intriguing because of their “primitive” lifestyle. In many ways the San are more sophisticated than we are. Without much effort they have attained the higher principles so often quoted by the mystics of Eastern religions -- joy and living totally in the present moment, lack of judgmental attitudes, unconditional love and being in the flow of nature and the cosmos.

The only spiritual practice they appear to have that enabled them to reach this enlightened state is the purity of their relationship with wilderness. They have no esoteric techniques such as meditation or Yoga and cannot read or write. Hence nature alone may be one of the most powerful spiritual forces available for personal growth if accessed in the right way. If we were to derive this benefit as Westerners, we need to have as little as possible between us and the wild. The more we separate ourselves from nature, the more diluted the effect. We need to simulate the Bushman model as much as is feasible.

The Kua San depicted the mother earth as a pregnant woman created by the great spirit "Bisi." The huge belly of the woman that they drew ruptured, giving forth all the animals of the veld. The skin of the woman then became the crust of the mother earth whom the San treat with the greatest respect. The concepts of Gaia and Deep Ecology that we are only now beginning to embrace, are second nature to them. Although many Westerners are enthralled with the superb bushcraft or “hard” skills that the Bushmen have mastered in their brutal environment, just as noteworthy are their group interaction, or “soft” skills, as well as their spirituality.

These qualities seemed to arise from their austere way of life, which had been self-imposed for generations. Rather than assimilate with the Bantu or work on white farms, the San chose freedom in the depths of the Kalahari. Unfortunately, cattle ranching and the four-wheel drive have put an end to their unique, unfettered way of life. Change has now overtaken the San, and some have been overwhelmed by

the temptations of modern consumerism and alcohol. They are well aware of some of the commodities that could make life easier. But with each acquisition they become a little less free, without understanding that, by gaining something material, they are actually losing something far more precious.

The change in their way of life is most obvious in the alterations in their dwellings. They now have simulated the Bantu way of building and are separated from each other by the construction of small huts with doors on them. There are fences between the homes. Previously, the San would sleep together on the earth, next to the fire. As they acquire more possessions, they develop fear about who might dispossess them. San healers who trance danced in an altruistic, holistic fashion for the sake of the clan, now charge for services rendered.

There is nothing special about the San psyche. They are the same as we are in the West and, if anything, more prone to the temptations of materialism. What is unique is their habitat and their connection with the earth and cosmos, and this birthright has been taken away from them. Moreover, the San have tasted the fruit of our consumer society and have been seduced by its power. The attraction of "things" has overwhelmed them, and the ego sense of the San has changed. The social structure that kept everybody humble and egalitarian with little emphasis on ego has fallen away. And with this depletion, their spiritual life continues to deteriorate. Nevertheless, there are small groups of San who continue their ancient healing traditions and some San have learned to live in two worlds, reconnecting with the wilderness as the need arises.

As Westerners we can use the San model to reconnect with that primeval hunter-gatherer part of ourselves which resides deep in our psyche and was operative and functional for eons. By doing so, and by keeping as little between us and the wilderness as possible we can tap into a different spiritual dimension in wilderness. We can learn from their egalitarianism and humility since Eastern philosophy teaches that ego is the greatest obstacle in reaching our inner being. The spirit dance of the San is a powerful way of harmonizing the group, connecting with the ancestral spirits and the Great Spirit, as

well as healing sick members of the clan. The San believe that sickness or imbalance resides in all of us, but only becomes illness or disease in some. It is only with regular rebalancing with the use of the healing dance that health can best be retained or restored in the group. At a more basic level, it is when we reconnect with that hunter-gatherer part of ourselves that we can understand what this balance is.

The San and other hunter-gatherers close to the earth are the ideal examples for those of us wishing to formulate our own spiritual wilderness practice. Few of us will ever learn what it feels like to be a hunter-gatherer, to be so connected to wilderness that one needs it to survive. The true hunter-gatherer relates to nature beyond the five senses and lives in a psycho-spiritual dimension that we can appreciate but rarely experience. However, we can hunt and gather in the supermarket, fill our backpacks and walk into the wilderness for a week or more. This simple act can have profound healing consequences and help us connect with a part of ourselves that we may have lost. The essence of this inner journey is in keeping it simple and having the minimum of material possessions between ourselves and the wild outdoors. Anything that separates us from nature must be carefully scrutinized, whether it be a horse and its care or a video camera. It is best to venture forth on foot with a backpack, because it is then unlikely that anything redundant will be carried.

Many medics are very familiar with wilderness medicine in so far as it could help one or one's fellow travelers get out of sticky health situations in the bush. However, there is another kind of nature medicine -- healing or restoration resulting from the special qualities of wilderness itself. Few people use wilderness as spiritual practice or for deep inner healing. There is little information to be gleaned from the few books that talked to the subject. The wilderness psychology literature is full of data, but the closest one can get to the word "healing" is the term "restorative." The psychology information seemed limited, since the authors only report what can be objectively measured and most of what happens in wilderness cannot be put down in words. Transcendence and healing in wilderness have been labeled the "wilderness effect" but a more powerful term that speaks to the psycho-spiritual transformation that

can occur is “wilderness rapture.” Martin Buber said, "All men have access to God, but each man has a different access." With many people the access to God and the higher self can occur in wilderness. The most impressed quality of the San is their apparent lack of ego. It was this more than anything that seems to confer on them a sense of wholeness. They appear to be in much closer contact with their inner being than many sophisticated New Age Westerners.

“Those of us who have spent time in wilderness are aware of the fact that there is something more to the wilderness than we ourselves can express. Wilderness is an instrument for enabling us to recover our lost capacity for religious experience...”

“We cannot today recreate the original “wilderness man” in shape form or habitat. But we can recover him because he exists in us. He is the foundation in spirit or psyche on which we build and we are not complete until we have recovered him...”

Laurens van der Post

Jung and Maslow and Eastern philosophies have said the search for the true self or real self or higher self is at the core of all human motivation. Whether we know it or not, we are searching for this connection and the drive is always present, even if subconscious. The higher self, is that God-like part of ourselves mentioned in the Old Testament, or to a Christian way of thinking, is called the soul. In Yoga texts, it is the Atman. In order to reach our inner being or higher self, we must work through the ego, and recognize its limitations.

The ego and persona, "the mask" are connected intimately. The persona is who we think we really are and depends on status symbols and material possessions to support it, such as degrees, titles, money, the house we live in, the car we drive, the colleges our kids attend. According to ancient wisdom to be spiritually awakened, ego and persona need to know that there is a larger picture lying beyond.

Hence, the term transpersonal, as in transpersonal psychology, where one must go beyond the persona or ego to the transcendent. It is in the place beyond ego that the “wilderness rapture” occurs.

Ego is closely connected to a sense of power and is centered around the third Chakra. This energy center in our body described in Eastern texts is situated in the solar plexus area and helps us make our way in the world. Our personality is centered around the ego and it is a vital part of our development and makeup. However, in order to become self-realized or spiritually enlightened, the ego must subordinate to the higher self.

The San manage to reach these higher dimensions not by any esoteric practice but by their intrinsic connection with nature alone and by exposure to the multifaceted properties she possesses. Their ability to transcend ego, open their hearts and travel out of body during their trance dance is a testament of this quality.

The true self, does not need anything to support it, it stands alone. Activities that are inner directed tend to shift us toward our true self. These are done for their own sake and have no ulterior motive. This higher self is the place of inner peace, calm, harmony and at oneness. The little self, or ego, is the place of suffering. Nothing satisfies ego, there is always more money or fame to acquire and bigger and better things to collect. We all believe if we only had just that little bit more we would be happy. Of course when we get it we are not. If we spend extended periods in nature, with the right intention, it is easy to let go of ego and allow the higher self to emerge. When this occurs we appreciate a sense of wholeness, unity, wonder and healing at the deepest level of our existence.

There are many forms of inner-directed activity and if we were Zen masters, every function of our lives would be a meditation. The Zen concept of mindfulness can be a miracle but it is difficult for most Westerners to achieve. Wilderness is a natural and powerful catalyst for the inward journey and is diverse and varied enough to cater to anyone. Nature herself can be a natural meditation and “leave no trace” or minimum impact camping is a form of mindfulness practice. Solitude may be part of the

experience and if one adds to this any number of inner-directed techniques such as meditation, breath work, ceremony and ritual, the power of the wild outdoors can be amplified tremendously.

Wilderness is another way to connect with our inner being and the closer we can get to the model of the hunter-gatherer the more powerful the wilderness “rapture.” Experiencing nature is not only non denominational but is a tool for transcending ego and reaching for a deeper reality.

Further Reading

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- 4. The Harmless People, Elizabeth Marshall Thomas (Africasouth Paperbacks) Cape Town, South Africa 1988.**

Inner Passage or Outer Journey - What's it to be?

Jane Hollister Wheelright and her daughter, Linda Wheelright Schmidt, discuss the phenomenon of bonding with nature in the formative years in their book "The Long Shore." Their farm in central coastal California, when still wild, came to be symbolic of "the true self," whereas, the outside world seemed representative of the ego, or the smaller self. The ranch became the source of power for them and in the absence of personal nurturing they turned to the farm as their resource. They found the mother archetype in mother-nature. They noted that the earlier a child is imprinted with nature, the more likely the inherited primitive, psychological layer will predominate allowing the child to cope with the power of what wilderness has to offer. When one talks to those who are infatuated, bonded and not intimidated by wilderness one finds that they nearly all have had some early childhood experience of nature. The wilderness became a friend to them and was never something to be conquered.

Many of us see wilderness as "out there" while we live "here." We create this duality because of our unfamiliarity and our fear. When we do go "into" the wilderness we need to make all sorts of elaborate preparations so that we can feel safe and comfortable. Indigenous peoples laugh at us and say; ... "it was only when the white man came that wilderness existed."

Nature in Africa sees more masculine since one often has the possibility of being in flight or fight mode. In addition we who impose our macho attitudes on anything that seems threatening since to many the African bush is intimidating. This is not the case with the Bushmen who lend a non-adversarial feminine type of receptivity to their nature encounters. To the Western way of thinking Africa's nature seems to require action and energy. Maintaining the vehicle, finding one's

way, setting up camp, filming, hunting or fishing are the order of the day. It seems that men often miss the true essence of the energy of Africa because they are so busy with skills and competence building. Women on the other hand are more inclined toward a sense of being than beings of action. From the Bushmen we learn that the less material “stuff” there is to bring, maintain and support, the more likely one connects with the pure essence of the African experience. The San teach us that there are other ways of experiencing wilderness more profoundly.

Sitting in a vehicle while viewing game, you are the one trapped and the animal is free. One can get spectacular photographs up close because the fumes of the vehicle disguise the human presence. The game is used to vehicles and close sightings are common. When we are confined like this, there is a feeling of separation from the experience. Backpacking in big game country gets around this duality and if one goes on trail with a qualified guide, armed with a rifle to protect you from predators the experience deepens. You may not see as many animals because they see, hear and smell humans first. Bothered by your scent that to them signals danger they make off long before one can get a sighting. If one becomes more Zen-like in the bush it is enough to trek and know the animals are there without having to see them. They continually remind us of their presence with their scat, their spoor and their calls. Tour guides in Africa talk about experiencing the “Big Five,” lion, elephant, rhino, buffalo and leopard. Most visitors are not interested in wilderness rapture and want to be able to tick these off their list before they leave. But there are also the little five, the ant lion, the elephant shrew, the rhino beetle, the buffalo weaver and the leopard tortoise not to mention all the other wonders that Africa has to offer. The smaller things such as insects, plants, bushes, trees, sunsets, sounds, scents, the stars at night and the call of the bush (soft fascinations) are the gateway to a more inner-directed approach to nature. Animal sightings should be regarded a privilege rather than a prerogative.

If alcohol flows at night this “spirit” rapture will take you away out of the wilderness and you may as well be at the local pub at home. With too many people around enjoying the sound of their own voice the essence of the African night can elude you unless you walk off to experience it alone. When everyone is intent on identifying everything down to the last detail the inner journey becomes lost to an externally-based experience. Bird lists, binoculars and cameras supervene and something precious disappears in the process. There is no question that this is enjoyable, relaxing and a lot of fun but the magical, the mystical, the mantra and music of bush will be more illusive.

In truth...

“Only by going alone in silence can one truly get into the heart of the wilderness. All other travel is mere dust, hotels and baggage and chatter.”

John Muir

When on foot some of the best sightings and experiences come out of meditative approach to the wild. If one becomes extremely relaxed and attuned, it is not difficult to slip into the so called alpha state, which can be recognized on an electroencephalogram of the brain as a slower rhythm than our usual waking beta state of about 32 cycles per second. During normal consciousness we operate in beta, which is the fastest of all the normal rhythms recorded. The slower the brain wave activity the more profound the altered state of consciousness, so that if we practice, we are able to go from beta to alpha to theta and finally to delta where the rate can be lower than four cycles per second. Theta is a state well known to accomplished meditators. The delta state is utilized by shamans in trance and advanced Yogis but without skill and experience in this rhythm, one is likely to fall asleep.

The alpha state is easy to induce and allows one to be able to approach animals more closely on foot. Wildlife is exquisitely tuned into pheromones. Fear is a potent releaser of pheromones and if one is totally fearless in the bush and in a relaxed alpha state, animals sometimes ignore your presence. If the wind is just right, one can get up very close.

Every now and then in South Africa there is a well-publicized snake-sitting competition. Some lunatic goes into a snake pit full of deadly serpents such as mambas and cobras for 100 days or more. It must be possible to remain in this pit of potential death only by being in an extremely relaxed, calm, meditative state and becoming one with the snakes.

"I only went out for a walk and finally decided to stay until sundown, for going out I discovered was actually going in."

John Muir

William James divided "attention" into; voluntary or involuntary. These terms are somewhat confusing and the Kaplans label them more accurately as directed or non-directed attention. Directed, or voluntary attention is used in day-to-day living. It requires much effort since there is a need to eliminate competing stimuli and input. With overuse, the capacity for directed attention becomes diminished and leads to mental fatigue and "burnout," with decreased functioning and a lowered tolerance for frustration. This frequently manifests as selfishness, aggressiveness, decreased patience and sensitivity to others and a lessening of the ability to control one's reactions. Sleep has limitations in decreasing mental fatigue and a truly restorative experience is associated with non-directed attention that invokes interest, curiosity, fascination and harmony with the surroundings. Nature is a preferred environment with potential for restoration. Kaplan adds that in order to be

preferred, however, it must feel safe to the individual who can then explore without concern about taking unnecessary risks. Environments that are preferred and safe are less likely to result in directed attention. They do not deplete our cognitive capacity and are more restorative. The “soft” fascinations found here, occur in the space of sunsets, scenery, sights, sounds and smells. They seduce our senses and create attraction, enchantment and even rapture. Non-directed attention is also invoked during the use of “soft” skills such as group interaction, meditation, singing, drumming, ritual etc. Just because one is in nature or the wilderness does not make it inevitable that the experience will be restorative. We need to recognize whether we are using directed or non-directed attention.

Many outdoor schools focus on minimum impact trekking and giving participants enough skills in wilderness so they can remain comfortable, warm, dry, well-fed and not likely to get into dangerous situations. The thrust of their commitment is on wilderness leadership. Their courses are extremely busy and they learn navigation, cooking and baking techniques, wilderness first aid and how to keep warm and safe in extreme conditions. In these schools the wilderness becomes the classroom, rather than a place to restore the psyche. Little time is afforded to connecting with the magnificence of the surrounding. This is fair enough given their mission statements to teach outdoor “hard” skills. This is entirely appropriate since if one cannot be safe in the wild, the transcendent becomes unimportant and it would not be desirable to encounter it in the form of a near death experience. Nevertheless, it is illustrative of directed attention in wilderness and transferring everyday cognitive abilities to the wilderness situation.

Goal-oriented behavior in wilderness can lead to the same thing. If one’s sole objective is to “bag a peak,” run a river or make a destination within a certain time frame, one can enter into

a technical exercise not connected with the uniqueness of sacred space. Some trails become endurance trips and any potential to tap into a deeper reality is lost. One often hears language such as we "made it" in which case it is likely that you did not have time nor energy to stop and smell the roses." More concerning is the almost militaristic or acquisitive jargon in wilderness situations such as "bagging" peaks and "conquering" mountains. Those who do not enter the wild outdoors with care and humility are bound to pay the consequences and these can sometimes even be fatal. When nature gets angry the hardiest also perish.

Outward Bound runs courses with the idea of self-mastery in mind. Their philosophy is to increase the technical difficulty of various exercises so that success leads to a sense of mastery in the wilderness that can be reflected as a metaphor into real life. Outward Bound, like other outdoor schools is ostensibly outwardly-directed and many of the activities invoke the use of directed attention. However at the end of the training there usually is a 48 hour solo, which often is reported as being the most powerful aspect of the trip. Here, the students are offered the opportunity to connect with soft fascinations and go inward when left on their own in the wild. Outward Bound may imply that participants are "bound to go outward" which would include competence building, self-mastery, self-concept and self-esteem. This "self" is distinct from the higher or true self encountered in the inner journey in that it is centered around the ego. Only when we reach beyond ego do we become self-aware and cognizant of a "bigger" self with deeper meaning. Unfortunately Western conditioning is such that we believe that only things centered around ego are valuable.

Outward Bound historically has been through three distinct models of operation. The first was called the "Mountains Speak For Themselves." Groups were taken into wilderness and nature was allowed to perform its magic without facilitation. Usually there is social pressure to do what the group does and not to appear at all different or strange. The result is merely a continuation of the

same behaviors occurring at home and in the work place. Even in the most magical of wilderness situations it is difficult to step out of everyday reality into the surrounding world of wonder, and people tend to maintain their habituated patterns. We hesitate to be alone and spend even a little time away from the group to contemplate and meditate. In spite of this, the wilderness continues to work its magic even if in a somewhat diluted form, since "the mountains do speak for themselves!"

The second model that Outward Bound developed was called "Outward Bound Plus." The same familiar skills courses were applied, but group interaction complemented each exercise and it was found that this model was more successful than the first.

The most recent model is the Metaphoric Model where a particular exercise is used as a metaphor and becomes psychologically identical to a real life situation, or "isomorphic." The experience is designed to be successful, facilitating self-mastery and self-esteem and the achievement can be applied to true circumstances in everyday life with a resulting improvement in managing a given challenge. On these trips group interaction does enable some form of inner-directed communication.

Outward Bound's courses are extremely successful in increasing self-mastery, self-esteem and self-concept and their trips often lead to peak or transcendent experiences in nature.

Nevertheless, the emphasis of these schools, whether Outward Bound or others, is on utilizing directed attention in much the same way one would use it for any training technique. The power of nature is such that it still has a transcendental effect. These are considered incidental bonuses arising out of the curriculum.

Neurophysiologists divide the brain into two halves, left and right. The left side is masculine, cognitive, intellectual, logical and analytical. The right is feminine, intuitive, symbolic, compassionate, creative and empathetic. The right permits inner-directed experiences and is

compatible with non-directed attention and the "Inward Bound journey." It is the gateway to the higher Self. The left brain feels more at home with hard skills and being cognitive, operates with directed attention. The left brain is centered around ego and competence building.

As one ages the psychological need for the inward experience sometimes supervenes. We become less anxious for physical challenges, especially when contrived. There is a difference between accomplishing a difficult river crossing if the option is turning back, versus doing a technical exercise because the group leader says you should. There is a difference between crossing a high mountain pass to continue your route, versus scaling a rock face just because its there. Physical feats that have purpose and meaning are more likely to be fulfilling than ego oriented tasks and Kaplan affirms that people like to do tasks that "matter." As we age we are happy just to be in the wilderness and allow it to offer up its challenges spontaneously. There are enough of those. For many of us our work is so cognitive, demanding and outward that when we do get away from it, we need all the restoration that we can get in a short space of time. Many adventurers today have already accomplished a certain self-mastery in their lives. They have done all the right things and achieved what society demands of them. In spite of adhering to the book of rules, and fulfilling the "American" dream there is often little self-satisfaction and inner peace following this attainment of materialistic success. One has gained the carrot at the end of the stick and found that in consuming it there is not much pleasure. Thus, many of us turn inward and look to find completion by connecting with that deeper part of ourselves.

Many travelers have enjoyed the magic of South America and found Peru especially to be a favored destination. Peru and similar mountain paradises are very different from Africa. Everything seems softer, not only the scenery, but also the people. Although South American culture is quite

macho, there seems to be a matriarchal influence, and the masculine energy pales by comparison to that found in Africa.

Just as brain functions can be left and right maybe the same can be true of the geomancy of places. Peru or other mountain areas are more feminine, Africa or jungle ecosystems more masculine. Mountains represent the moon energy channel of the Yoga Chakra system. The cool, pale, blue, moon or feminine energy. Africa, the Amazon or other jungle areas are the sun channel, hot, red, or masculine. It may be easier to just "be" in the Andes. Cognitive knowledge is not significant to the experience. Fascinations are "soft" and lead to more profound contemplative and meditative states of mind. Add to this the mysteries of ancient civilizations, about which little is known, and you had an ideal model for fantasy, imagination and going inward. Non directed-attention can prevail.

In Africa, however, it is easier to "do" than to be. The African bush demands certain cognitive skills to survive and men especially can remain on automatic pilot and transfer directly from their work-a-day world into the African outback. One can get very technical about how to be in the bushveld, and the cliché "you don't have to live like a barbarian to enjoy the wilderness" is taken seriously. All this leads to great ingenuity, toys and gadgets when it came to camping. There is also a certain coded behavior and toughness required. This attitude moves us a way from the Bushman model.

Africa is so rich that anyone would be lucky to know all there was to know about just the ungulates in one lifetime. One is bombarded by countless things that need identification and explanation. This plethora of information inspires the left brain and requires directed-attention. One can tap regularly into an external experience using all of one's faculties to gain as much knowledge as possible. The bushveld is replete with binoculars and mental agendas of what people expect to

see. Travelers psychologically tick off the various highlights as they continue on their journey. Busy agendas tend to push soft fascinations and the inner experience away. Moreover, there is usually a point at which even a soft fascination becomes an interesting project requiring the use of directed-attention.

It is easy to sabotage any possibility of wilderness rapture. A camera can be a distraction so that the wilderness is experienced purely through the eye of the lens. It is almost impossible for someone not familiar with all that the African bush has to offer, not to be sucked into the miracle of its complexity and want to know intellectually what is going on.

The more spiritually sophisticated trailist is content to just "be" in wilderness and "be" happy to know that the birds and animals are there, whether they present themselves or not. Whatever presents itself is a gift, whatever fails to appear is not a disappointment. It is sufficient to relate to the spoor, the sights, sounds and smells that abound.

The ego yearns for knowledge as a way of demonstrating power and has to be subverted to gain an inner experience. This requires walking a fine line between directed and non-directed attention with emphasis on the latter. This is a challenge for most Westerners, especially in the company of a group hungry for information. It is clear that we need both inner and outer, intellectual and intuitive, methodological and magical. We need to strike a balance between the two without becoming attached to the outer.

Tom Brown, a North American wilderness man, has written extensively on Native American Indian traditions of hunting and gathering. He runs a survival school in New Jersey, and has said that when one develops the skill of a hunter-gatherer one is able to enter into a different psycho-spiritual space that those who have not reached this level of expertise cannot understand.

We cannot learn to be hunter-gatherers but we can expand our relationship with nature if we have the right intention.

Before embarking on any wilderness experience one must ask, "Why am I doing this?" Intention is key because; "if you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there." If the intention is an inward, healing, life-sustaining encounter with nature, the journey must be structured differently. The inner journey requires a different emphasis. The leader and group will determine the type of experience. If the goal is externally directed the group will be also. If bird lists are the order of the day, then the inner dimensions will suffer. If alcohol flows around the campfire at night, the experience will shift. If there is a time restraint that causes the group to hurry, goal orientation will supervene. If photography is paramount, the viewfinder will dictate the impressions. A wilderness leader with an inner orientation recognizes wilderness as a sacred space and gives it the respect it deserves. She is likely to facilitate an adventure that is not only more intimate but more restorative to the psyche as well. There are few wilderness organizations that stress the spiritual and it is difficult to find groups pursuing the inward journey. One must search the new age magazines under shamanism, yoga retreats, vision quests, etc.

Ideally the trip itself should be in pristine wilderness where there are few or no signs of human activity and there should be as little as possible separating the participant from wilderness. It is best to approximate the hunter-gatherer model and remain closely connected to mother earth and the cosmos with as little technology as possible in the way. Endurance tests are anathema to the inward journey. Nature will offer up her challenges either way. The trip leaders should possess all the hard skills necessary to keep the group warm, dry, comfortable and well fed. However, leaders need soft skills as well. The guide should allow time for those who wish to go inward and there should be some meaningful form of group interaction. Supportive help can release travelers from

distracting responsibilities. Logistics of the trip are less important than the intent of the group and the skill of the guide.

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Wilderness Rapture and Healing in Nature

It is unlikely that the inward bound wilderness experience will ever be quantifiable since much of what we are trying to analyze, borders on the spiritual and is not easily measured. The emphasis here is on the inner journey into wilderness, and no excuses will be made for the fact that we are trying to appreciate our higher self in the process.

A deep connection with the higher self occurs when we experience wilderness rapture. This has also been called the wilderness "effect." Relating to wilderness on a deep inner level depends on our balancing the polarities nature provides in such a way that this enables us to come in touch with our higher selves. There will be individual variation on how this occurs depending on our genetic makeup, present life situation, culture, religion, conditioning, education and so on. We cannot hope to find a model that fits all, any more than we can hope to find a belief that fits all. We can, however, find an approach using basic principles that will help most of us make this connection.

Usually those seeking nature as spiritual practice have not scaled high mountain peaks, run dangerous rapids or been in extreme wilderness situations. Yet they have usually encountered and overcome other life challenges, so that their sense of self-mastery, self-concept and self-esteem are secure. The wild outdoors is a great teacher of self-awareness and that is the first step in connecting with the higher self. If one is not self-aware, there can be no moving towards the true self. Ego is another obstacle on the trail to the true self and it is best for the ego to be fully developed before we leave it at the trail-head. The wilderness journey we are talking about, therefore, is an internal one and the external is de-emphasized as being food for the ego and likely to provoke a relapse back into the false nature of materialism.

There seems to be a sequence of that can be summarized as follows:

Experiences in and out of nature create a certain level of self-concept, self-esteem, self-sufficiency and self-mastery so that the ego base becomes solid and secure. This energy is focused especially around the third chakra or energy center.

Outwardly directed hard skills in and outside of wilderness invoke **directed attention** and use of the **left brain** which leads to an increase in:

self-concept

self-esteem

self-sufficiency

self-mastery

These **hard skills** or achievement oriented learning experiences are focused around the **ego**. However, once the ego is secure correct **intention and receptivity** create self-awareness.

Intention and receptivity shift as a result of life's traumas or one's patterns of behavior no longer being effective in terms of inner peace.

Self-awareness creates the need for inner growth and acknowledgment of the limitations of ego in our quest for **self-realization and transformation**.

Wilderness is one of the many inner paths for attaining this through the medium of **soft skills, soft fascinations, non-directed attention and the right brain**. This requires an understanding of some psychology as well as knowledge of the higher energy centers of the body described in ancient mystical texts. In fact nature is a room with many doors each leading to transformation if approached with correct intention. It is the mega-meditation or the big gun for the deepest inner healing.

The information available in contemporary psychology is deficient and we need to turn to ancient wisdom for more complete understanding. These traditions have a sophisticated understanding for those seeking a path of self-transformation. The hunter-gatherer model and indigenous wisdom augment this understanding. It is clear that a core belief permeates this mass of information and there are universal spiritual principles that apply to any inner journey and especially to the healing inner journey into the wild outdoors. The distillation and application of these esoteric principles is discussed in greater detail in the final part of the book. A summary of relevant psychology information follows.

"It was only when the white men came that wilderness existed."

Luther Standing Bear.

In the West, we have created a separation between ourselves and wilderness. Wilderness has become something to be conquered, rather than a sacred space, and this ethos lies deep within our culture. We look at wilderness as being remote, an area to be approached with preparation and trepidation. However, when people are taken into wilderness this reality often reverses, and the desire to control or conquer vanishes. This is replaced by; a sense of harmony and a feeling of letting be, a release from this duality that we are "here," and wilderness is out "there."

There has been considerable research on the psychological effects of the wilderness, both by Outward Bound and others. Most researchers have concentrated more on the external experience of wilderness and hard skills. Competence building is the order of the day, and these philosophies have worked well for youth, executives, employees, the disadvantaged, delinquents, substance

abusers, psychologically disturbed people, battered wives and victims of physical and sexual abuse. There is a reproducible positive effect on self-mastery, self-esteem, self-concept and self-awareness.

Researchers such as Rachel Kaplan and Stephen Kaplan, Robert Greenway, John Hendee, Michael Brown, Randall Pitstick and others have concentrated more on soft skills and the inner experience of wilderness.

In Rachel Kaplan's Outdoor Challenge Program, the shift turned away from the Outward Bound model with the elimination of survival skills, physical hardships and rappelling. There was a change in purpose for the 48-hour solo, which became less stringent and more concerned with relating to the environment than how to survive. She noted the increase in self-concept, self esteem and self-sufficiency described by researchers, but also found that participants became more realistic and developed an increased concern for others.

Kaplan noted three phases during the trip:

- 1) **Getting to know**
- 2) **The solo**
- 3) **Re-entry**

1.) Getting to know -- to most novices was a matter of some urgency. In a few days, however, the candidates realized there was no need for this as they became comfortable with their surroundings. However, as discussed previously when in the African bush, there can be no end to the "getting to know period" if one concentrates on all there is to learn. This will take one away from the more inner healing aspects of the bush.

2.) The solo created some contrasting effects, but overall the solo proved to be a positive experience.

3.) Re-entry often produced re-entry depression.

One should be careful with groups to re-enter slowly and gradually, since it is irresponsible to take people out of pristine wilderness and drop them off in the middle of downtown Los Angeles. The more powerful the wilderness experience, the greater the re-entry depression. In pointing out the importance of re-entry depression and how the extent of it can be a measure of the success of the trip, one Inward Bound participant asked, "You mean, if I am suicidal on my return, this trip has been a great success?" Naturally, the re-entry depression has not only to do with the intensity of the experience, but also with the conditions to which the person is returning. Someone coming back to a miserable relationship, a dissatisfying job and no support group in downtown New York in winter is likely to be more profoundly depressed than another en route to Hawaii, with a great family life and satisfying career.

Kaplan noted a paradox between the benefits of returning to civilization and the sadness of leaving nature behind, but overall there was a more positive appreciation of daily life. The contradictory effects were as follows:

- 1) Participants were more patient but also more irritable.**
- 2) There was an increase ability to concentrate but more distractibility.**
- 3) Many felt good but also terrible about the world.**
- 4) There was a feeling of inner peace but also alienation.**
- 5) Some were more tranquil but also more harried.**
- 6) Although less fearful of danger, some were more on guard.**

7) **There was an ability to find joy in simplicity but also appreciate luxury.**

Overall a sense of wholeness, exhilaration and renewal or restoration seemed to occur and this often lead to a new perspective by the participants of themselves. There was no need to be fearful since they had coped with the fear of the wild, and for adolescents this was frequently a form of initiation or a right of passage.

Most other researchers stress mediation, competence building, environmental diversity, enjoyment of nature, physical fitness, release of stress and tension, escape from noise and crowds and outdoor learning. Kaplan is quick to point out that contemplation, meditation and the spiritual side of nature receive the lowest priority. We can reverse this conditioning by allowing travel groups the space to go inward because when given the opportunity, most participants find this highly meaningful.

Robert Greenway used specific techniques, such as meditation, breathing, Yoga and ritual -- before and during his trips -- to decrease cultural programming and to increase awareness. There was a three-to eight-week preparation period prior to entering wilderness. These practices were important to help re-integration and ease the re-entry depression.

Before leaving for the wilderness, a group of strangers developed into a close, cooperative community. Ritual was used extensively from the time the trip began until the end. Everything except life-threatening situations was handled by consensus, empowering the group and defusing stress. There also was a solo for three to four days, singing, all-night chanting rituals, climbs to peaks at sunrise or sunset or in silence in the moonlight. The men and women were separated for several days and the Native American styled sweat lodge was utilized. Minimum impact techniques (or a Zen type of mindfulness) were germane to the trip.

Greenway has observed certain patterns among the trekkers.

- 1) **An increased sense of aliveness, awareness, well-being and energy.**
- 2) **A break with addictions ranging from significant to minor.**
- 3) **An increased sense of empowerment.**
- 4) **The re-entry was initially pleasant and enjoyable, but within 48 hours turned to depression.**
- 5) **Major life changes upon return, either in personal relationships, employment, housing, lifestyle or academic progress.**
- 6) **Success in conquering fear and expanding limits.**
- 7) **Adoption of at least one ritual, including tuning into nature's cycles, chanting, Yoga and praying before meals.**
- 8) **Acknowledgment of alone time being the single most important aspect of the trip. Getting up before dawn, climbing a ridge or peak in order to greet the sun was cited as the second most vital experience.**
- 9) **Most called the trip one of the most significant events of their lives.**

Greenway also discusses fear and says that it was rare not to have someone mention the subject at some point. Fear appeared to be an important issue, in spite of the fact that no hard skills were used, such as rock climbing, rappelling, etc.

He also noted a shift in dream patterns and that most participants noted dramatic changes in the quantity, vividness and content of their dreams within the first 48 hours. Most of these changed from busy urban scenes to those of the group or some aspect of wilderness.

There was a distinct difference in the effects the wilderness had on males and females. The transition into wilderness was easier for women, the return easier for the men. Women tended not to be interested in going anywhere once in wilderness, whereas men liked to explore. Women were more tuned into cycles, such as the moon, whereas men became more involved with meditating and chanting.

Some of Greenway's recommendations include: using ritual, contemplation and other techniques; eliminating time restraints; creating a community; recognizing the four elements and the four directions; balancing solitude and group activity; practicing full honesty; protecting the wilderness; being sensitive about the return, and continuing one's inward practice after the trip.

There are many qualities here that simulate the San hunter-gatherer type of existence, such as egalitarianism, ritual, singing, separation of men and woman when appropriate and connecting with the four elements and celestial events. There is little to separate participants from the effects of nature while backpacking. This approach is likely to put the participant on an inward journey, and at the same time maximize restoration and healing.

John Hendee and Randall Pitstick have described a model for the use of wilderness for personal growth and inspiration and discuss the following aspects.

- 1) **Receptivity**
- 2) **Optimum Stress**
- 3) **Cultural change and a break from prevailing norms**
- 4) **Opportunity for attunement with nature and oneself**
- 5) **Experiencing wilderness metaphors**

1) Receptivity is necessary for personal growth to take place. Those that are complacent or in denial are less receptive and not as likely to experience personal transformation. However, those in transition and suffering emotional trauma or personal crisis, such as -- divorce, death of a loved one, loss of a job, illness -- are more likely to be open to what wilderness has to offer. Greenway disagrees with Hende's premise and states that it is often the least receptive candidate who has the greatest transformation, and vice a versa. Hende points out that it is probably this variable of receptivity that accounts for such a difference in the results of many wilderness studies.

2) Optimum Stress: Personal growth depends on the right degree of stress in wilderness, and the threshold for this depends on the individual. Stress can uncover core patterns of behavior that can then be modified for the better, although an excess of stress can be harmful and inhibit personal growth. Greenway believes that stress stands in the way of growth and transformation and that the usefulness of stress to arouse learning is limited.

3) Cultural change and a break from prevailing norms: Wilderness offers escape from a conditioning that influences so much of our behavior. Slowing down and focusing on essentials can free us from daily patterns, opening horizons to new awareness.

4) Opportunity for attunement with nature and oneself: Soft skills, such as group process, reflection, solitude, etc., are crucial here and can create a shift from a left-brain, to a right-brain orientation.

5) Experiencing wilderness metaphors: This idea is similar to Outward Bound's use of metaphors providing a new method of seeing reality from a re-framing of the old way. This may encourage leadership, creativity, better reasoning and problem solving. Success in dealing with challenge in nature can create successful coping behavior, which then can be transferred to situations in daily life outside of wilderness.

Hendee and Pitstick state the following:

When certain conditions are met in the wilderness, personal growth occurs in a definite sequence. These are assisted by the effect of primal influences, which lead to a sense of awe and humility in nature.

Wilderness causes increased self-awareness, which stimulates personal growth. When old patterns of social interaction do not work, we re-evaluate old ideas and develop more effective interaction. In a milieu of honesty and trust, we see ourselves differently and change our undesirable qualities. However, if the ego defense is high and receptivity low, old patterns are replicated and no growth occurs.

Brown has elaborated on the neurophysiological implications of so called right and left brain activities. It is a combination of both the right and left brain activities which leads to whole brain function in wilderness. This is relevant to wilderness rapture and as we will see later has strong correlations with Yoga, Kundalini, Kabbalah and certain shamanic techniques.

Brown emphasizes the point that most workers in wilderness concentrate on left brain, masculine or hard skill activities such as rock climbing, kayaking, skiing, etc. It is, however, in the space of the right brain or feminine experience that the transcendent aspect of wilderness occurs. If we are to realize the more spiritual effects of wilderness we must use more ways to stimulate right brain activity.

Brown explains that whereas, the left brain is outer-directed, purposeful, rational and analytical and involves will, strength and endurance as well as goal-oriented behavior and hard skills, the right brain is more inner-directed: meaningful, receptive, intuitive and symbolic. It involves compassion, empathy, love and the soft skills contained in such activities as contemplation,

meditation, dream work, dancing, singing, art, body movement, breath work, etc. The left and right brain can be integrated into whole brain function in wilderness. Other facilitators of right brain function include relaxation, reflection, writing, poetry, visualization, art, music, dance, mime, Tai Chi, Yoga, solitude, ceremony, the sweat lodge, rituals, rites of passage, vision questing, fasting, drumming, chanting, pain, prayer, and the use of wilderness itself. These must become part of the group interaction if we are to access our inner passage in the wild.

In summary the effects of the wilderness experience include.

- 1) **Empowerment; self-mastery; self-sufficiency; increased self-concept and self-esteem; self-awareness; being "more like myself;" self-actualization and self-realization.**
- 2) **Peak experiences; feelings of awe, oneness, wonder; transcendence.**
- 3) **Humility and the illusion of human control over nature.**
- 4) **Connectedness with nature; a sense of comfort in nature; a lack of the need to control.**
- 5) **Increased consideration of others; more openness and affability.**
- 6) **Appreciation of simplicity and the ability to live in the present moment.**
- 7) **Renewal; increased aliveness and awakening; feeling less cluttered, more mindful and focused.**
- 8) **A break with addictions.**
- 9) **Alone, or solo time, appreciated as the most valued.**

The outward journey will encourage self-esteem, self-concept, self-sufficiency and self-mastery. The inward journey will open us to self-awareness and by facilitating the right brain can

connect us to our higher selves. The effects of this inner healing can be profound and sometimes induces peak experiences. This begs the question as to what exactly is a “peak experience?” We will see later that this phenomenon occurs when we ascend an energy hierarchy and come into direct contact with our inner being. The potential of this mechanism in bringing us inner peace gives us cause to understand this dynamic, so that we can renew ourselves in and outside of nature as often as possible. It is discussed in the last part of the book.

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Wilderness, Truly Something Special

“What wilderness does is present us with a blueprint, as it were, of what creation was about in the beginning, when all the plants and trees and animals were magnetic, fresh from the hands of whatever created them.”

Laurens van der Post

Is wilderness special or is it just an ordinary place where we can play out our physical needs for walking and hiking, river running, and various forms of adventure activity? Could we do just as well in a contrived, controlled adventure oriented environment? Some wilderness researchers fail to acknowledge the uniqueness of nature and feel the need to prove scientifically that wilderness is, or is not, special. More often than not, this takes the form of studies trying to demonstrate that the wilderness environment is particularly restorative. Naturally this begs the question as to whether there is a specific spiritual dimension to wilderness that is more powerful than anything we might encounter in a church, synagogue, mosque, or temple. Does wilderness indeed have some special quality?

Ulrich, an architect interested in these matters; proved that viewers of natural scenes have more relaxed electroencephalograms (recordings of brain wave activity) than those watching an urban display. He noted that if individuals were shown scenes of a motor vehicle accident, they experienced a quicker return to normal blood pressure and muscle tension, if afterwards they viewed natural scenes rather than urban ones.

There also is evidence to show that patients who have had major surgery and have views of trees from their rooms recover faster and need less pain medicine than those with a view of a brick wall.

Prison inmates who can see trees from their cells seem to have fewer stress-related problems than those who do not and other studies have shown that even the most hardened criminals found work on farms and gardens meaningful. This led to changes such as a sense of accomplishment, an increase in self-esteem and willingness to assume responsibility.

Kaplan has reviewed the importance of nature in our daily lives and the information can be highlighted as follows. What we can see from our home window is more vital than we might think for our well-being and access to nature from the work place decreases work stress and increases job satisfaction. The “extent” of the nature environment is important for mental health and does not relate to the size of the area. There is a preference for trees over large expanses of ground and people are more interested in the way the space is designed. There should be a sense that there is more to explore than is immediately apparent. The proximity of nature is essential, more so than the size and has been labeled “the accessible green.” If the nature spot is more than three minutes away by foot it will not be utilized since the distance seems to be more important than the need.

Those who tend gardens are rewarded with greater life satisfaction. More important than large open spaces are trees, landscaping and the opportunity for gardening. The relevance of directed versus non-directed attention seems relevant to the fulfillment attained by gardeners. Those who initially begin growing vegetables change to growing flowers presumably for the pure aesthetic pleasure of this “soft” fascination.

Hartig, Mang and Evans performed two experiments. In the first they studied three groups. The first consisted of wilderness backpackers, the second of a non-wilderness vacation group and

the third of a control group. All three were studied before and after and were noted to be identical on initial testing. After the vacation they affirmed that the wilderness backpacking group showed better scores on not only a proof reading test but also on the so-called Overall Happiness Scale. This improvement in happiness and performance could be measured in spite of the re-entry depression that occurred in the wilderness backpacking group. Re-entry depression aside, there was nevertheless a proactive restorative effect enabling better coping with stress three weeks later.

If there is such a thing as a compassion index, I find as a physician that it is restored and maximized on return from an extended trek in nature. After that, it gradually dwindles, and after three months of intense work, the saddest of medical situations does not seem to evoke the empathetic response that it should. There is no question that wilderness has profound benefits on the abilities of this healer to heal. The injunction, "Physician heal thyself!" could not be more accurate than in this predicament. After returning from a trip whole and healed, one can be the healer one is supposed to be and give sufficient energy to the task at hand.

Hartig, Mang and Evans were able to show, using similar parameters such as the Zuckerman Index for Personal Reactions, the Overall Happiness Scale and a proof reading study, that even a brief nature walk provided more of a restorative effect than an urban walk or a relaxation exercise. There is evidence that there is more restoration in wilderness and nature settings. There are no studies to show that one must be immersed in it, but spending one week in a hotel in pristine wilderness is not the same as getting into wilderness as a backpacker, canoeist, or horse trekker. On trails I have taken usually more than half of the group will volunteer a sense of loss coming off the trail and a desire to be back in pure wilderness.

In separating ourselves from wilderness with creature comforts, we do not experience the full potential of the restoration. We must become a part of the wilderness for it to bestow its

benefits, which is most evident in the wholeness witnessed among the hunter-gatherers of the world. Our body must become part of the encounter and we must serve as more than just observers. One has to feel, touch, smell and taste as well as see and hear it. There are no studies that speak to this phenomenon, and I am not aware of any investigation that has analyzed a wilderness vacation in a luxury lodge and compared it to a wilderness backpacking adventure.

The following metaphor illustrates the difference between being immersed in nature and just watching it. Recently there was a squall that passed through Santa Barbara. It had been raining for days and the surf was high. My daughter and I breakfasted in a restaurant on the beach and watched the waves crashing nearby on the sand. It was a special opportunity to enjoy the storm, the breakfast and each other's company. While we ate, we watched two surfers riding the six-foot waves. As we were finishing, they came out of the surf, cold and wet and passed by our window obviously exhilarated after their close encounter with the ocean. We could see it in their faces and eyes and hear it in their conversation. Our contact had been vicarious and enjoyable but somewhat detached from the elements. Theirs was more intimate, vital, uplifting and inspiring.

It is likely that the more we approximate the hunter-gatherer model, the more we will discover the spiritual or self-actualizing benefit of the wild and the primal. We discover who we really are when we separate ourselves from material things that are not us. We benefit by ridding ourselves of these external encumberments that bolster ego and prevent us from reaching the inner center of our being.

The How To's of Wilderness rapture

- 1) Receptivity and Intent**
- 2) Fear and Stress**
- 3) Sacred Space and Special Environment**
- 4) Connection With Metaphors, Archetypes, and Signs**
- 5) Primal, Primeval, and Primitive Experiences**
- 6) Humility and Subordination of the Ego**
- 7) Peeling Away The Levels of Consciousness Leading to Self Awareness, Peak Experiences, or Moments of Transcendence**

Receptivity and Intent

Each individual's search in wilderness will determine the outcome. That which we seek will be that which we receive. Action will follow intention and this will decide the result. If the idea of going into nature is to learn backpacking techniques, more than likely, a technical experience will be all that is gained. If we are looking to reach a greater spiritual dimension with ourselves in the cosmos, this will probably occur.

There have been major figures in the history of wilderness preservation in the United States including Thoreau, Muir and Leopold, who expressed themselves through the medium of wilderness and with its help became self-actualized. Visionaries such as Moses, Jesus, Buddha and Mohammed, as well as other sages through the ages also used wilderness for spiritual growth. The

differences in receptivity and intent among participants probably accounts for the inconsistency of results found amongst the various wilderness studies in the literature.

Fear and Stress

"It must be a poor life that achieves freedom from fear."

Aldo Leopold

Most people fear the unknown, but in fact it is really the known we should fear. Information that has been imposed upon us by past conditioning limits our perspective and holds us in a box of captivity. By going beyond the known, which should be feared, to the unknown, which should be embraced, personal growth is facilitated. It is, however, in this transition from known to unknown where fear and stress occur.

Fear stimulates the autonomic nervous system leading to the classical fight or flight reaction that also can involve freezing and feigning death. This cognitive appraisal of a "threat" varies from individual to individual and depends on each person's appreciation of the event. The evaluation may be appropriate, as when being charged by a lion, or it can be misconceived. In spite of the recognition of danger being incorrect, the autonomic nervous system will elicit its usual response and release adrenaline from the adrenal gland resulting in all the typical symptoms: dry mouth, dilated pupils, racing pulse, etc.

If we are subjected to unlimited stress, chronic elevation of adrenaline and cortisone levels in the blood stream can cause pathology. This kind of stress, which causes distress or dis-ease, can be labeled true stress -- as opposed to eustress, which can be a beneficial form of stress leading to a

sense of fulfillment once resolution has occurred. One person's stress may be another person's eustress.

According to Yoga scriptures, the first or root chakra situated at the coccyx is an energy center responsible for our survival response and fight or flight reaction. Yoga philosophy teaches us that mastery of this primitive chakra is crucial before energy can be channeled upwards into the higher chakras.

When nature causes a flight or fight response, we hopefully respond correctly and if we live to tell the tale, there is often a sense of healing. This is different from the chronic low-grade state of emergency that modern day society creates in our autonomic nervous system. A primal first chakra response resulting in a positive outcome leads to wholeness and healing. Chronic stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system leads to an excess of adrenaline and cortisone, which creates high blood pressure, raises cholesterol levels and increases atherosclerosis or hardening of the arteries. It may induce diabetes and decrease immune resistance to diseases particularly cancer.

Part of Outward Bound and similar organizations' responsibilities is to control this cognitive appraisal of fear in such a way as to extend one's boundaries and abilities without the limitations of past conditioning. Success leads to self-mastery, increase in self-esteem and the recognition of the restrictions we place on ourselves.

Fear as a result of past conditioning relies on memory, and the use of successful strategies can lead to a reframing of the old programs that bind and limit us. Overcoming fear and stress is so important in wilderness. It leads to a greater sense of the ego-self, and with the right awareness eventually to higher states of consciousness.

The causes of fear have been labeled in various ways: superstitious and religious, loss to life or limb, organ or function, deep, dark and steep and the unknown. The most critical of all fears,

however, is social or the ego. In different studies done in wilderness situations and other areas of stress, the social fears were the most prevalent, such as fear of holding the group back or making a fool of oneself. This may be one of the reasons why the solo journey into wilderness is so powerful. When the individual is alone there is no one except nature to judge. Nature is neutral and also has its own way of humbling the ego and diminishing its significance. If we are on our own there is no reason to protect a fragile ego, and we are more able to slip out of our persona and connect with our higher self.

The greater the perceived risk, the greater the potential for personal growth and the more lasting the effects of the experience. In other words, especially when it comes to self-mastery, no pain no gain! It is also true, however, that one can have a wilderness peak rapture or profound transcendent experience in nature without stress or fear being involved.

The hard skills type of adventure into wilderness is very much connected with fear and stress, which may or may not break through into a connection with the higher self or a peak experience. More likely than not, it will bolster the ego leading to an increase in self-concept, self-esteem, self-mastery and even self-awareness, but not necessarily an intimate connection with the true self of our inner being.

Endurance should not be part of the curriculum unless nature demands it unexpectedly and then it can be an added bonus for the transformation. Whether one is going to “make it” by the end of the day should not be an issue, so that participants can just "be" in the wilderness without having to worry about fending for themselves. With inner directed intention it should be the responsibility of the leader to take care of the hard skills aspect of the trip and free the group energy for a more life fulfilling experience.

It has been said that those with the furthest to go will gain the most, and herein lies the essence of what is called "perceived risk." What feels like a life-or-death situation to one person may be a walk in the park to another. The former is likely to be far more impacted by the event than the latter. It follows that anyone can overload on fear and stress and that too much can debilitate the psyche. F.D. Roosevelt was an avid hunter and outdoors man until his trip to the Amazon. Apparently after this arduous ordeal he never left his homestead again to venture into the wilderness.

My experience in wilderness has been that, "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger," even if in the moment of the experience one is not able to see the value of a severe test. The more devastating the experience, the longer it takes to integrate. Something profound is happening at a deep unconscious level that may never be fully appreciated until later when there can be a sense of completion and knowing that this was indeed a valuable, though painful, event.

It is usually the least likely candidate who contacts you years later thanking you for what he describe as one of the most profound experiences of his life. Other members of the group may just remember how taxing that individual was at the time and how he had been a detriment to everybody else's experience.

Stress, fear and pain carry great power, and more primitive cultures have understood this in evolving their rites of passage or initiation ceremonies. This first chakra "fight or flight" experience is essential for personal growth, and if it is bypassed there may be a deficiency in the spectrum of self-mastery. There seem to be two dynamics; the self-mastery that occurs in the hard skills experience of the left brain, and the more transcendent experience that happens in the realm of soft skills in the right brain. Severe trials and tribulations can be encountered in a feminine soft way and be overcome by the psyche at another level, bypassing the ego. The challenge resolved by hard

skills that bolsters ego and self-esteem is always the easier one to talk about over a few beers around a campfire. The other, dealt with at a deep level in the psyche, is not something we can put on the mantelpiece and boast about but it has profound significance.

Manipulating fear and stress during the teaching of hard skills can lead to increased self-mastery, self-concept, and self-esteem, important first steps on the path to self-actualization. The army manipulates fear by increasing the complexity of the exercise and the risk factors or level of danger. Fear will increase if there is less time available to complete the task or if there is a withholding of vital information from the soldier. Unusual things can occur in the context of fear and stress. The use of the soft skills will create an inner directed experience that puts us in touch with the transcendent, where fear and stress may not necessarily participate. Candidates for inner journeys into wilderness may be less far along the path to physical mastery and less accustomed to physical ordeals than those adept in hard skills. Nevertheless, if nature offers up her challenges spontaneously, the effects arising out of fear and stress can be life altering.

The power of nature is such that it offers us whatever we need in that present moment. Depending on our receptivity, this can be processed in such a way as to help us on our path of personal development. In the words of The Rolling Stones: "You can't always get what you want. But if you try, you just might find, you get what you need."

Sacred Space and Special Environment

The power of one's initial experience in a novel and exotic place is often startling. These completely new and fresh exposures help us get in touch with the uniqueness of the environment by bringing us into the present moment. They also shake us free from our habituated patterns of

behavior. Some of the magic is lost on subsequent visits to these primal areas. Those of us who spend time in wilderness have no doubt that wilderness is more than a restorative environment and fulfills the requirements of a sacred space, possibly more so than any church, synagogue, mosque or temple. The words of a bushveld trail guide in South Africa to his group on entering the wild said it clearly: "This is my church; don't desecrate it!" There are multi-dimensional possibilities here that do not exist in other situations. The more pristine the area, the more powerful, hence the value of areas untrammelled by man.

"Wilderness is an area where earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man; where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

The Wilderness Act of North America

The act is true to the archetype of sacred space and recognizes it as such.

Sometimes the areas visited are so sacred they could be called "power" spots. When one comes into these areas, it is well to honor them, if not for their magical healing effect, then for one's own sake in the hope that the gods, spirits or energies of the place are not disturbed. There is little doubt that wilderness in general, and some areas in particular, have a sacredness or numinosity to them. If we are able to visit in a respectful fashion, our trip may be more meaningful and safer as well.

Connection With Metaphors, Archetypes and Signs

If one can be propelled into a profound meditative state just by looking at a flower, how much more so when we are involved in the exquisite beauty of a completely functioning ecosystem. Metaphors, archetypes and "signs" all seem to be more prevalent in wilderness than in any other environment. These signs that arise in wilderness seem to be woven into the archetypal journey of the hero. Because of a heightened awareness or altered state of consciousness the meaning of this sign is usually quite clear. It is only when the individual merges with nature that this sign is likely to appear, or more accurately that the sign when it does occur will be interpreted as meaningful. It is very much a part of the unconscious and the spirit world and will speak to us in that language. It does not arise cognitively out of left brain activity, but is a function of the more symbolic and intuitive right brain expression. This sign, be it a metaphor or archetype or something else, can offer a solution to one's problems and become a guide to the perplexed seeker of wisdom. Native Americans have a sophisticated understanding of psychodynamics. In order to facilitate the process, wilderness was used as the vehicle; and fasting, solitude, pain and sometimes mind altering plant substances were added to the medicine of wilderness. They recognized that it was usually in the outer wilderness that a sign could emerge that would speak to the inner wilderness of the psyche.

Frequently the sign takes the form of an animal, which brings a message of clarity to the psyche at that moment in time. These animals have been called "power animals" by certain shamans. The power or totem animal, is not necessarily a grand animal that you would like to be, such as a mountain lion or an eagle, but rather the animal one needs to emulate, such as a mouse, if

this means one needed to learn more humility. The attributes and qualities of a power animal can help us along our hero's journey. During and after trips into wilderness we should be especially cognizant of any animals that cross our path and what that might mean to us in terms of the archetypal energy of that particular animal.

After being in wilderness for several days one can truly "be in the moment" in a Zen-like sense and metaphors pop up as signs that have profound meaning for problem solving. Something complicated and insurmountable may become extremely simple in the wilderness environment when looked at in the context of metaphor. This can be profound, and occur as an "Aha!" type of revelation or it could simply be a subtle change in awareness that will alter the way we work in the world.

The Native Americans believe that during the vision quest, when one merges and becomes fused with wilderness, a sign, dream or vision will arise that is critical in determining one's journey. This clarity may create wilderness rapture or a "peak experience." The signs will present themselves and the psyche will decide whether they are vital and where to fit them into one's life context. After being in wilderness with correct intention there is often a shift in consciousness, which is key to the experience. In this state we are able derive an interpretation from a deeper level. The importance of archetypes will be discussed in a separate chapter.

Primal, Primeval and Primitive Experiences

Primal, primeval and primitive experiences can help us connect with our cellular memory and the inherited intelligence of our DNA. By tapping back into the primitive we can make contact with this long forgotten part of ourselves, and wilderness is the best place to do so.

The analogy of the African weaver bird fits here. One can bring a weaver bird out of the wild into captivity and away from other weaver birds weaving their intricate nests. Subsequent generations of weaver birds will continue to know how to weave nests in spite of having no contact with other birds doing so. This is an expression of instinct residing in non-learned behavior. We have similar non-learned intuitions and instincts we can tap into in the wild if given the opportunity. It is not so long ago that we were all rooted in wilderness as hunter-gatherers.

Since Africa is the cradle of man where we all originated, it is no coincidence that this is the most compelling place to tap into such a power. We are open to these intangible benefits by connecting with the primitive force in any wilderness environment, but it is particularly available on the African continent. Our being is imprinted with long forgotten instincts and this may be the reason that many people who travel to this vast continent feel a strong sense of connection and de ja vu.

Humility and Subordination of the Ego

When the ego dissolves we can come into a greater appreciation of our true selves. For those without sophisticated esoteric techniques such as meditation, breath work and sensory withdrawal, wilderness is an easy way. Wilderness "meditates you," whether you are aware of it or not. It makes us humble by bringing forth recognition of how insignificant we are. A feeling of having to control gives way to a feeling of letting things be. If one tries to control and conquer, becoming an adversary to wilderness, it usually will show you in no uncertain terms who is boss. Ego is the single most dangerous factor leading to disaster situations in nature. It is pride that comes before the fall, which may turn out to be many thousands of feet.

The complications of high altitude sickness, such as pulmonary and cerebral edema (an excess of fluid that can settle in the lungs or the brain) that can be lethal, are more common in a group setting, probably due to peer pressure and a reluctance of individuals to let the party know how they are feeling lest they hold everyone back or be perceived as not being able to "take it." In wilderness discretion is the better part of valor, and wisdom should supersede ego. The feminine approach is usually safer in wilderness, an aggressive macho attitude can lead to disaster. Humility and subordination of ego facilitate the inward journey into the transcendent, and it is this journey that is likely to be physically safer as well. Egomaniacal attitudes and machismo cause one to focus on goal-oriented behavior and achieving, which inhibit access to the transcendent and can be fraught with disaster. One only need listen to some of the stories on trail as well as read some of the best selling novels on survival situations, to realize it was bad judgment and ego that got them there in the first place. Nevertheless, it is a tribute to the human spirit that, even though ego does get people into precarious situations, there are hidden forces that can help them get out again.

By tuning into nature we are able to glean crucial information that bubbles up from the right side of the brain or from the third eye, or from our guardian spirits that can keep us out of trouble. The critical thing is to pay attention to them since they often pop up only to be ignored.

Peeling Away Different Layers of Consciousness Leading to Self-Awareness,

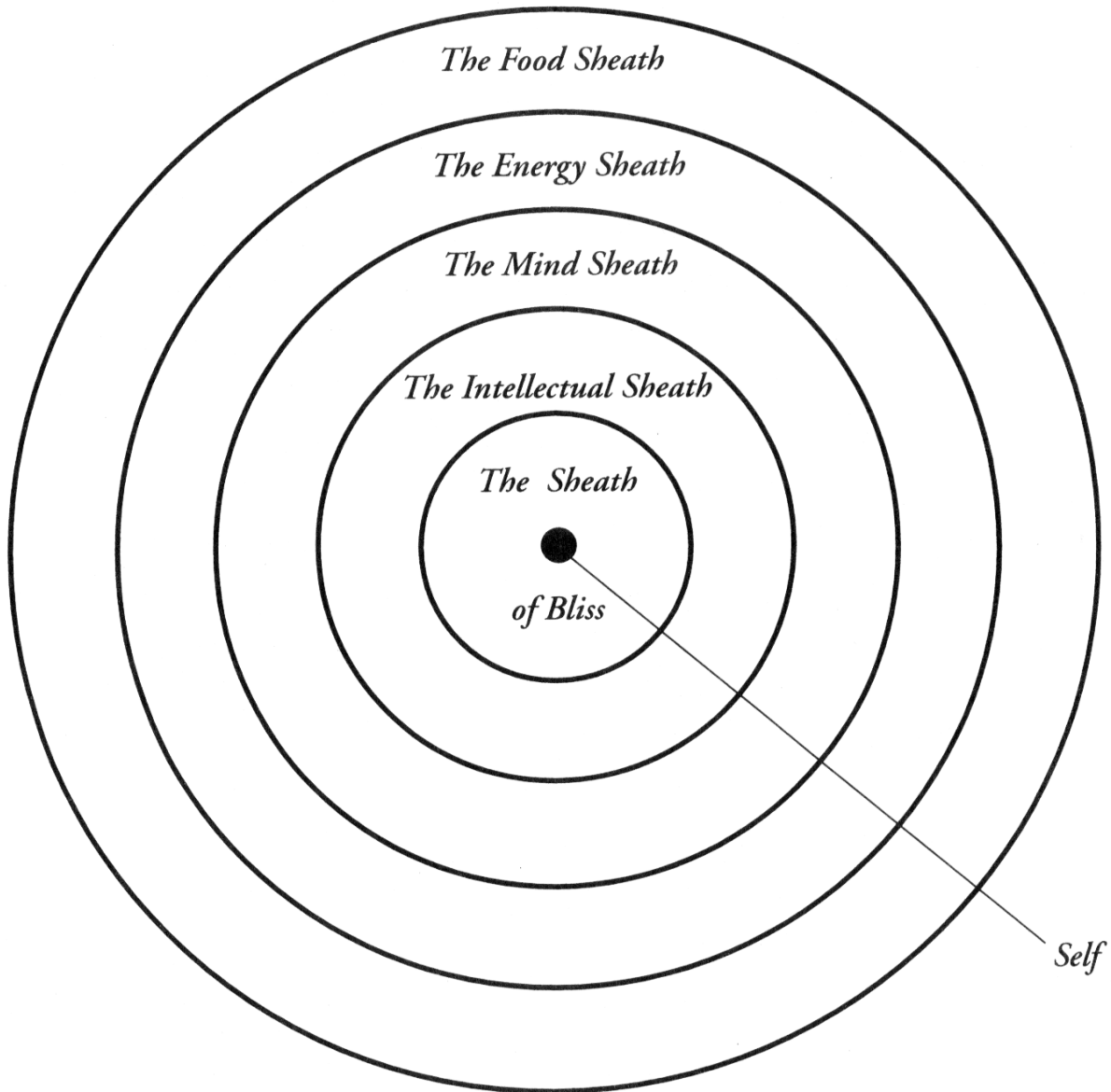
Peak Experiences or Moments of Transcendence

Solitude or periods of silence are uniquely powerful in wilderness. There is something special about relating one to one with our self, and the classical vision quest is always a solo event. It could be that this is the last step to subverting the ego while in wilderness. When we are on your

own we can let go. In order to find our Self (higher) we must lose our self (ego,) or as Christ said, "He that loses himself will find himself." It is difficult to let go completely when in the company of others, and no matter how harmonious the group, we still are bound by social interaction and by some need to protect our delicate egos.

For those of us who use wilderness as spiritual practice the process is very much like peeling away the layers of the proverbial onion to get to its core, with the self being at the center of the onion. At the beginning of the trail there are all sorts of layers of behavioral garbage and habituated toxicity surrounding the true Self and it takes time to unravel these to reach the center of our being. Five days seems to be a minimum in which to do this. Douglas P. Gillett et al in *The Journal of Environmental education* discuss the importance of time. He states that any field trip in e can be significant in terms of increasing, among other factors, self-concept. He suggests that five days is usually enough, but that less than that may not be. If one thinks of it in the biblical context, 40 days and 40 nights might be so profound as to forge a connection with the true Self that is sufficient for enlightenment. Solitude alone may have a lot to do with this, and one cannot help but feel certain people of great stature come out of long periods of confinement with a clearer vision of themselves and the problems around them. Naturally one has to be quite far along the spiritual path before undertaking anything as formidable as a 40 day solo. I have found that wilderness rapture is common in all inner-directed journeys after a period of five days. For some it can occur in less and for a few it may not occur with more. If preliminary inner work is done before the trip it frequently occurs after only two days.

The analogy between the layers of an onion and the five energy sheaths described by the Yogi, Patanjali, in ancient yoga texts is an apt one. (below)



Patanjali describes these sheaths, or layers or bodies, as follows: going from outside inwards.

- (1) **The Food sheath or physical body.**
- (2) **The Energy sheath or body of breath, energy, or prana.**

- (3) **The Mind sheath.**
- (4) **The Intellectual sheath.**
- (5) **The Bliss sheath, or Ananda, in the center of which is the Self.**

The Mind body, Intellectual body and ego together also have been labeled the **Subtle body**. The **body of Bliss or Ananda** has been called the **Causal body**. This model is extremely useful for anyone trying to understand the dynamics of reaching Self which exists in the center of our being. Jung described this as a spiral rising upwards towards a peak with the Self at the crest of the peak. The symbol of the spiral is an extremely important one and spans many ancient traditions.

Ego is referred to in Yoga text as I-ness and has a broader interpretation than does ego in the Western psychological sense. I-ness has no self-awareness and separates us from our true self. In the West we see the establishment of I-ness or ego as desirable, whereas Eastern philosophies talk about spiritual evolution occurring beyond ego. Attempts to transcend ego in the West have been considered by many to be pathological.

The Mind body is the primitive mind and is responsible for primitive thought, such as emotions, feelings, desires, impulses, habits and addictions. The Intellectual body, however, is the higher wisdom in us that dictates ideas, concepts, notions, beliefs and discrimination. The Intellectual body or higher mind should govern the lower mind, but does not always do so. If the Intellectual body can detach from memory and sensory input and detach from ego, it can step outside of the chain of cause and effect, i.e., the cycle of Karma. If it does this there is no need to be born again. If not, one repeats the cycle of reincarnation until we can demonstrate that the ego no longer has any binding power over our behavior. Things are done purely for their own sake and for no ulterior motive whatsoever, nor for any ego aggrandizement. A simple example of this may be

charity done for its own sake versus charity done for the sake of a tax break or getting one's picture in the media. This kind of act, though superficially noble, has an ego-binding motive behind it, the consequence of which is yet another cycle of rebirth.

The Mind body, or lower mind, is directly in touch with sensory input that often leads to a motor response. It is constantly in a state of flux, and without the higher mind to regulate it, has no ability to discriminate or evaluate. This can lead to anger, hate, jealousy and other negative emotions. With the help of the Intellectual body, the Mind body can generate positive emotions. Without this super-imposition, the Mind body resides in a state of doubt and acts on habits and impulse. The Mind body can be manipulated favorably with meditation and mindfulness. For those who believe in a mantra form of meditation, it is said that the Mind body activities that are often undesirable can be replaced with mantra. In Zen traditions, mind is modulated and governed with mindfulness so that mindfulness should extend into all our daily activities, from the most mundane to the most sublime, making all of them a form of meditation.

Simplistically speaking, there are two enemies preventing us from reaching our higher Self. The first is ego or I-ness and the second is the uncontrolled Mind sheath. Both of these are intimately connected and governed by the Intellectual body, and hence the three form a triad. The Mind body believes that the primitive emotions arising from it represent truth when, in fact, this is the chattering monkey sitting on our shoulder giving us messages of delusion. It is the Mind body that is operating when our emotional garbage comes up in wilderness or anywhere else. For some, this "mind" trash can be modulated and governed by the Intellectual sheath. We can take responsibility for our negative emotions and realize that this spiritually debilitating conversation is not us and that it needs to be released. If the emotions of the Mind body become reality this results in denial of self-responsibility and assignment of blame. Judgment is a powerful tool for the Mind

body, and judgment, blame and self-righteous indignation are frequent manifestations of this sheath during the stress of wilderness situations.

It is possible to tap into the five sheaths of Patanjali during a wilderness trek or any other spiritual endeavor to access the higher Self. The wilderness journey is one of the most powerful tools for personal transformation, since it is multi-faceted and taps into all components feeding the psyche; fear, primal experiences, ego (or humility,) archetypes, metaphors and the higher Self itself.

Researchers in Transcendental Meditation refer to the "Superfluidity State." This is an effortless state where projects seem to progress of their own accord. Actions become automatic and just "flow" and concentration appears minimal. There is a different quality to consciousness and no doubt a slowing of the brain wave frequency. It appears that we begin the journey with our physical body or food body and go inwards from there. As wilderness works its magic we tap into our energy body or body of prana and may develop unexplained energy with the ability to walk all day or carry the heaviest pack. We are tapping into a different source of supply that seems limitless and sometimes leads to extraordinary physical feats like those seen by martial artists as they connect with Chi or similar energy reservoirs. These states resemble superfluidity.

Unfortunately, the Mind body is often a large part of some peoples' journey and they are unable to get out of the space of blame, judgment, envy, hate and other negative emotions. For these, significant shifts in wilderness take longer, as their psyches slowly integrate and appreciate the dynamic. There is no doubt that exposure to the multifaceted dynamic of the wild will confront us with the psychic debris we least want to confront and this occurs in the Mind body.

Others govern the Mind body with the Intellectual body, but may still be in the space of the mind. However, there is no acting out and the rest of the group does not suffer. They are nevertheless in a state of internal conflict where mind is bubbling up and wants to take over, but the

higher wisdom or learned behavior says otherwise. Still others have a highly developed Intellectual body and are in the space of higher wisdom that is more closely in contact with the next level of the Causal body, or the body of Bliss. They are not so strongly attached to defending their egos.

When energy moves toward the body of Bliss we start to connect with the higher Self. Many of us may experience this at some stage of the journey and recognize it as being a momentary profound change in our state of consciousness or a peak experience. It is usually brief and as we try to hold onto it, it disappears.

This model of Patanjali goes beyond what Western psychology has to offer which is truth at an experiential, if not at a scientific level. With the help of this model one can watch people tapping into the different energy bodies and see how each one manifests. Meditation and mindfulness in wilderness go a long way to modulating the Mind body manifestation which is a cause of much suffering to most of us, as is our ego. Since wilderness facilitates mindfulness and entry into the meditative state, it is hardly surprising that peak experiences are so common.

Patanjali's sheaths are useful to appreciate the level at which we are operating. They are a map to follow to climb up to another level. The biggest obstacle to entering higher levels of consciousness is the Mind body, or the lower mind. Since meditation and mindfulness can fill the Mind body and modify its background activity, these are powerful tools to keep the Mind body in check and help the Intellectual body supervene. Wilderness can modulate the Mind body in such a way that the higher wisdom of the Intellectual body takes over and there is no more space for our monkey's annoying chatter.

The first step to higher states of awareness is the appreciation that this Mind body, which occupies so much of our waking state, is a distorted perception of reality. Nothing creative occurs in this space, and it is a perseveration of old conversations we have with ourselves over and over

again. This emotional garbage that comes up for us on trail needs to be released into the wilderness. These are our negative desires, emotions, habits, compulsions and addictions. The wilderness can accommodate this type of mental delusion and will be happy to help us take care of it if we tend to our physical garbage and take care of wilderness by using mindful, minimal impact techniques.

All these factors can be appreciated on wilderness journeys that are inner directed. If the group leader is aware of them, and the group's intent is well matched, a truly transformational or restorative journey can occur.

Further Reading

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Archetypes

Archetypes described by C.J. Jung are universal themes running through myths, fables, fairy tales, sagas, legends and stories with characteristics universal to all cultures. For example, the archetype of the tree in all traditions is the link between heaven and earth. Archetypes exist in the human unconscious and the collective unconscious and can be compared to the instinct of an animal.

There are numerous archetypes, but particularly appropriate in wilderness are the hero, the earth mother, the persona, the Self, the shadow, and the sacred space archetype.

Our persona or mask tries to approximate our ego ideal and like our ego conceals our true Self or true nature from us. The archetype of Self is different to that described in Eastern philosophies. Jung regarded the Self as the central archetype of wholeness comprising the total personality including the ego. The individual can self-realize only if the ego is willing to subordinate to the Self. Eastern thought believes that samadhi or ecstasy can only be attained if ego or "I-ness" is completely transcended. Jung argued that samadhi was actually a loss of consciousness, and that clarity could occur only in the context of ego. Western conditioning would support the argument that ego transcendence is pathological. No election campaign would succeed if delegates adopted a strategy of ego effacement and stressed the importance of the higher Self. The Dalai Lama would be unlikely to win a seat in congress.

The archetype of sacred space is very much part of the wilderness journey. Difficult to reach, it is mystical and numinous. Humans cannot remain there, and usually the individual comes

back from the sacred space with a gift or grail or a vision of himself in his community and place in the universe. The seeker often is transformed by the experience.

The shadow archetype will be discussed in a later chapter relating to the control of judgmental attitudes while on trail. The earth mother archetype is easily understood by the Sanskrit concept of the creation, by "Bisi" - the Great Spirit in an earlier chapter.

In "The Hero With a Thousand Faces," Joseph Campbell says, *"The hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder. Fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won. The hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."*

There is a Sanskrit chant which translates, *"May the hero awaken from forgetfulness and transcend all anxiety and sorrow."*

In the context of Kabbalah, the hero is seen as having to conquer the serpent, which is wound around the central trunk of the Tree of Life, in order to reach Keter, the highest sephira and enlightenment.

These examples are typical of the archetype phenomenon where the same theme is similar in the eyes of an American, Joseph Campbell; an Indian Sanskrit saying, and the Jewish mystical belief of Kabbalah.

These archetypes are an essential part of our psyche and their importance needs to be acknowledged.

The journey of the hero, or the journey of initiation or any rite of passage has been defined by Arnold Van Gennep as occurring in three distinct phases, **severance or separation, threshold or the journey itself, and incorporation or integration.** The hero's journey is the quest for one's own higher Self, a journey into one's own psyche.

In the first phase of separation the hero hears the call to adventure. He must either follow it or kill something within. This call is a yearning for the extraordinary. The first level of resistance must be overcome (work, home, spouse, children, friends, etc. telling you not to go,) and once this is done guides assist the hero to point out the dangers and show the way. This is the phase where synchronicity may appear. Jung described synchronicity as a meaningful coincidence where two events occur simultaneously, linking the inner psyche with the outer event. For example, one makes a decision to take a trip and a brochure arrives that day describing the very trek you wish to take. The hero may be armed or given a symbol of power, such as a sword in the classical tales of old. Today this is more likely to be some form of knowledge, in the form of a book or a teacher to help one on the way.

Following separation the hero enters into the second phase: the threshold or the journey itself. Usually this takes place in nature, in wilderness, in a cave or a forest. The hero passes into a world of supernatural wonder where strange forces are encountered and the ordinary world left behind. An obstacle or physical force is met, such as a dragon, guard, or fierce dog, which must be overcome before victory is won. The hero faces death and physical danger before encountering the dangers of the psyche, the shadow parts of one's life, or the dark night of the soul. This is critical for the hero to be reborn, or become whole, self-realized or self-actualized. With the knowledge and confidence of the success of the first physical obstacle, and with the object of power such as a sword, the hero is able to overcome the more difficult second confrontation, the struggle with his basic fear. Of the two fears, the psychological can be greater than the physical. Having prevailed, the hero earns the reward of a grail and the treasure of inner knowledge.

With this new gift the magical numinous world can be left behind. The hero departs the threshold with a new awareness and returns home with knowledge and power to help. Now the

phase of incorporation begins. The journey cannot be completed unless the hero brings the wisdom of the experience back to the community. The journey is ultimately an altruistic one.

During the phases of separation and threshold fear will come up with all its manifestations. Without confronting fear, the archetypal journey of the hero's journey cannot be fulfilled. In this lies the wisdom of organizations like Outward Bound and the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS,) that connect the student at least partially with this powerful archetype and help some complete the journey of the hero. The student is compelled to undertake a series of potentially dangerous activities of increasing difficulty, ensuring -- if at all possible -- that success is achieved. The student gains an appreciation of self-mastery and awareness that later can be taken back to the community and integrated.

There are fewer heroes in public life these days. While many people complete the first two phases, few complete the third phase of incorporation. An example of this is the Olympic athlete who fulfills the phases of separation and threshold. However, the phase of incorporation where something is taken back to the community is usually lacking. This may also be true for a wilderness school graduate when any newly acquired self-mastery is used to gain more material wealth and status. This particular journey is more accurately termed the warrior's journey. Our Western society is replete with successful warriors. Not infrequently, when the modern day American warrior enters the threshold phase and encounters a metaphorical dragon that disallows access to the forest, another way of overcoming the obstacle, is having one's attorney sue the dragon. This is a non-archetypal way of gaining access to the forest.

One could ask if there is also a heroine's journey. There certainly appears to be one. In fact, it is women today who seem to be living truer to the archetype of hero. A struggle with an illness such as breast cancer can easily take on the dimensions of the heroine's journey. Most men have

forgotten the importance of this form of travel and the women seem to be doing it instead. The men I know seem to be stuck on a treadmill of work, mortgage payments and frustration where the only manifestation of the hero's journey is what may be encountered vicariously in a television program or at the movies.

So-called "primitive" peoples seem to understand the psychological importance of the process and use it to the greatest effect to make their young men whole. At a certain age they are forcibly "separated" from their mothers and the womenfolk to undergo rigorous training with the older men, finally culminating in a terrifying ordeal such as ritual circumcision. After this they can integrate back into the tribe or group as men and take on new responsibilities. Today, amongst many African tribes, this rite of passage is still intact, and ritual circumcision is a significant part of it. Hunting of an animal may be another part of the process. Here, the three phases of initiation are fulfilled. The psychological and physical pain a boy must endure in some cultures with surgical removal of his foreskin without anesthesia or a sharp scalpel, is something few of his counterparts in the Western world would be able to endure.

In the West our rites of passage pale by comparison. A Barmitzvah approximates a formalized rite, but the worst the child can be concerned about is embarrassment because he did not say the portion of the Torah as well as he might. The same may be said for confirmation. There is no physical danger or pain, and the three phases are not part of the process or its preparation. There is no real separation from the maternal. There is a threshold phase that is intellectual, but no physical dragon need be faced. Neither is there any incorporation phase. The youth's life is only just beginning in the West, and many skills must be learned before incorporation occurs back into the society. Parents can tell a pampered Western teenager how courageous he is, but on the inside he knows differently. The feeling must be earned at a deeper level.

A certain amount of bravado goes on between teenagers and gangs today that is somewhat an attempt to connect with this archetype. Part of the energy that is generated often has to do with female onlookers, or at least the peer pressure of fellow males. In the traditional initiation ceremony no females are present and the process is ritualized into something meaningful. The elder wise males of the society are in attendance, and pressure comes from a different source. The youth will carry this all his life and retrieve it from the psyche when the need for courage and fortitude arise. Armed with this past experience he can believe in his ability to handle whatever comes his way. I cannot help but think that this inner strength has enabled many Africans to endure with equanimity and courage the numerous trials and tribulations the continent continuously offers up to them.

The power of a rite of passage resides in the memory that the initiate has come through an awesome ordeal and that whatever life brings he will be able to go back to that time and trust that he can cope now as he has coped before.

It is easy to formulate any wilderness journey of sufficient duration into the three phases described by Van Gennep. In the first phase of severance, we must separate from past conditioning and old patterns of behavior. We drop away from our stereotypes of teacher, nurse, lawyer, engineer and doctor so that we can reach into something fresh and new about ourselves. With an open, empty mind, not filled or restricted by stale conditioning, we are more able to receive what the sacred space of wilderness has to offer. To symbolize this one could consider changing one's name at least for the duration of the trip.

During the threshold phase our emotional baggage will come up on the trail as a manifestation of another archetype, the shadow, where we project our dark side onto others in the form of judgment and blame. There must be a forum for expressing feelings, and a talking or council circle helps defuse touchy situations. This is not an attempt to have psychotherapy in the

wilderness, but there has to be an outlet for some of the powerful emotions that surface. Participants must take responsibility for their own journey, both physical and spiritual, and in circle are allowed to discuss only their own feelings. No finger pointing is permitted.

Time can be allotted for discussing the ramifications and detrimental effects of blame and judgment. Since fear is a large component of this phase it should be discussed in detail, and releasing one's fears can be ritualized into an appropriate ceremony.

Finally, at the end of the trail the group enters the phase of incorporation or integration, where re-entry depression can supervene. The "leaving" of wilderness should be designed to be mindful and the reentry must be discussed so that participants are prepared for some strong emotions, both positive and negative. Very often the group realizes how profound the wilderness effect has been only on the re-entry phase. On their return others they encounter seem profoundly different. Voices are too loud and there is a general feeling of sensory overload. This is often the first inkling to the seeker that they have in fact been in an altered state of consciousness. The inward aspects of the trip are best kept to oneself because they may be misunderstood. The more outward components are easily described and are less likely to lead to discord when back home. Participants are discouraged from making any major life changes until these powerful effects have subsided several weeks later. The subconscious effect of the trip might continue to work for many months and manifest itself in different ways including major lifestyle changes.

The "real you" is likely to be the primal you, out in the wild, the one more deeply connected with your inner being. When readapted to the various toxicities that society imposes, this "you" may be supplanted by a persona-like version of the original. We all need to remember who we really are, and if we cannot permanently carry this back, we should at least reconnect with it from time to time by making contact with our higher Selves with some form of spiritual practice.

Practices such as breath work, meditation and Yoga that have been introduced on the trip are encouraged afterwards. Some discipline done for its own sake, without an agenda or goal needs to be developed. This can take any form as long as it is regular and enjoyable. The overwhelming overload of external stimuli and food for the ego will tend to suck us back into former ways of being and old patterns. A regular connection with some form of spiritual discipline can prevent this. The importance of the Buddhist concept of a sangha or community is stressed for those who can connect with others and practice together. Group energy is self-supporting and more powerful.

The hero may return with a profound vision, or more often just a sense of clarity of how to be better in the world. This may translate itself into doing one's existing job with more compassion and intensity, and not necessarily making dramatic changes in one's life. We can either change what we are doing or change the way in which we are doing it. The same is true for relationships that can either be given up or negotiated in a different way. A regular practice and group participation can prevent the "fall," or the sacrifice of the rediscovered "you" to material pursuits.

Managing the re-entry or incorporation can be summarized as follows:

- 1) **Acknowledge the re-entry depression as a gift resulting from a profound encounter with your true Self. It is an indicator of the intensity of the wilderness rapture and the altered state of consciousness. The more powerful the journey, the more profound the depression.**
- 2) **Separate needs from wants on the return. It is the "want" and not the need that will sabotage a successful integration. Beware the seduction of materialism. There is nothing wrong with materialism as long as the energy required to sustain it does not take us away from "following our bliss."**

- 3) **Practice the walk and suppress the talk; live the vision rather than describe it. Family and friends are more likely to pay attention to a shift in behavior for the better than to any transformational experience described in words.**
- 4) **Do not dive back into old habits and addictions. Substitute them for a form of spiritual practice that is enjoyable, practical and likely to last. One cannot face the challenges of modern society without the help of some method of going inward. This does not have to be anything esoteric; surfing may be more powerful than meditation, gardening as good as Tai Chi.**
- 5) **Develop a community that can be self supporting. There is synergy in groups, where in terms of spiritual energy $2+2=5$ and $5+5=15$.**
- 6) **Live out your vision, be true to your own myth or follow your bliss (Joseph Campbell).**

The essence of incorporation is to give the gift gained from the journey away. This act will bring just as many benefits to the giver as it will to the receiver. Albert Schweitzer understood this well.

“I don't know what your destiny will be but one thing I do know, the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.”

Further Reading

- 1) **The Rites Of Passage, Arnold van Gennep (The University Of Chicago Press,) 1996.**
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- 3) **The Roaring Of The Sacred River, Steven Foster and Meredith Little (Prentice Hall Press,) New York, 1989.**
- 4) **The Power Of Myth, Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers (Doubleday,) New York, 1988.**
- 5) **Betwixt and Between, Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation. Louise Carus Madhi, Steven Foster & Meredith Little. (Open Court,) La Salle, Illinois, 1988.**
- 6) **The Way of Council, Jack Zimmerman and Virginia Coyle (Bramble Books,) Las Vegas, 1996.**
- 7) **Practical Jung, Harry Wilmer MD. (Chiron Publications) Wilmette, Illinois, 1988.**
- 8) **Man and His Symbols, Carl G. Jung (DoubleDay - A Windfall Book) New York, 1983.**

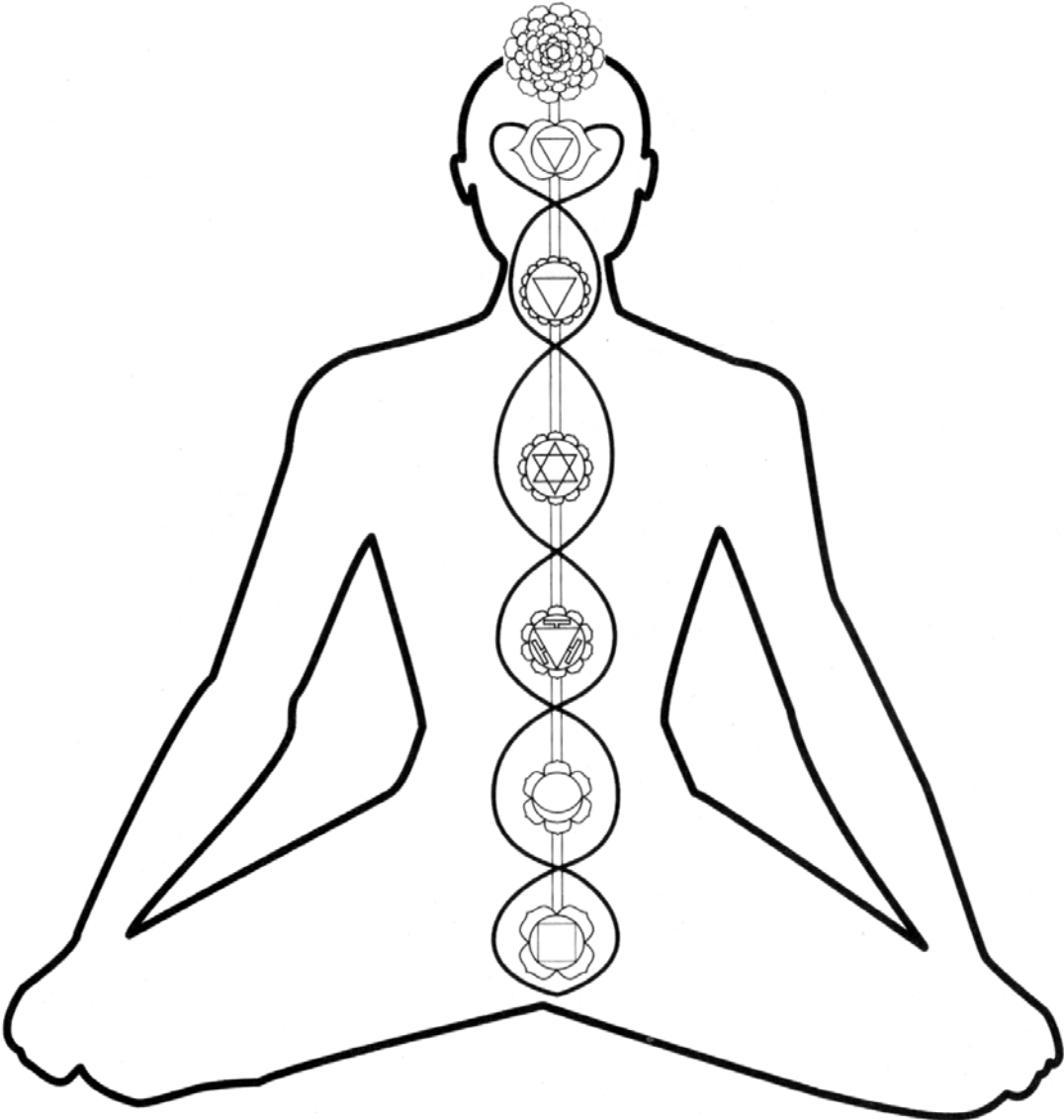
Opening up the Heart

“We are all climbing toward the summit of our hearts’ desire. Should the other climber steal your sack and your purse and wax fat on the one and heavy on the other, you should pity him. The climbing will be harder for his flesh and the burden will make his way longer. And should you in your leanness see his flesh puffing upward, help him in a step; it will add to your swiftness.”

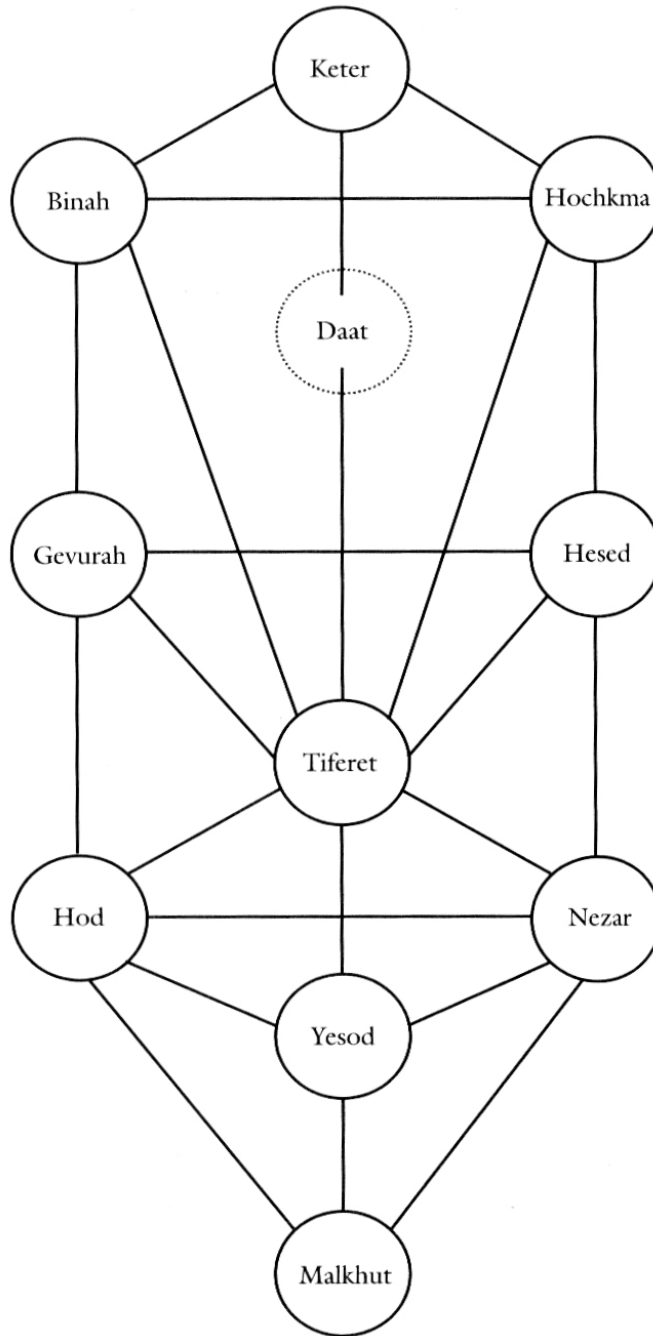
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If we are to make the most of our inward bound wilderness trek or any other spiritual pursuit we need a practical way to take some of these simple but difficult principles with us into the wild. We do not have to make our journey into a religious or devotional exercise but by being mindful, aware and in the moment with our personal process we can improve the quality of our leisure time for ourselves and our fellow travelers.

In this new age, a term we often hear is unconditional love. This is a lofty ideal, and few of us will ever reach that level of spiritual development where we can truly love everyone. The San Bushmen shaman must open up the heart to reach the transcendent through the Trance Dance. Yogis say that of the three blocks or “knots” in the chakra system that prevent the flow of Kundalini energy, the heart block, is the most important. The symbol of the heart chakra is the hexagon, or the six-pointed star and that is also the symbol for Tiferet, the heart of the Tree of Life. Kabbalists affirm that once one reaches Tiferet, students on the spiritual path can teach themselves.

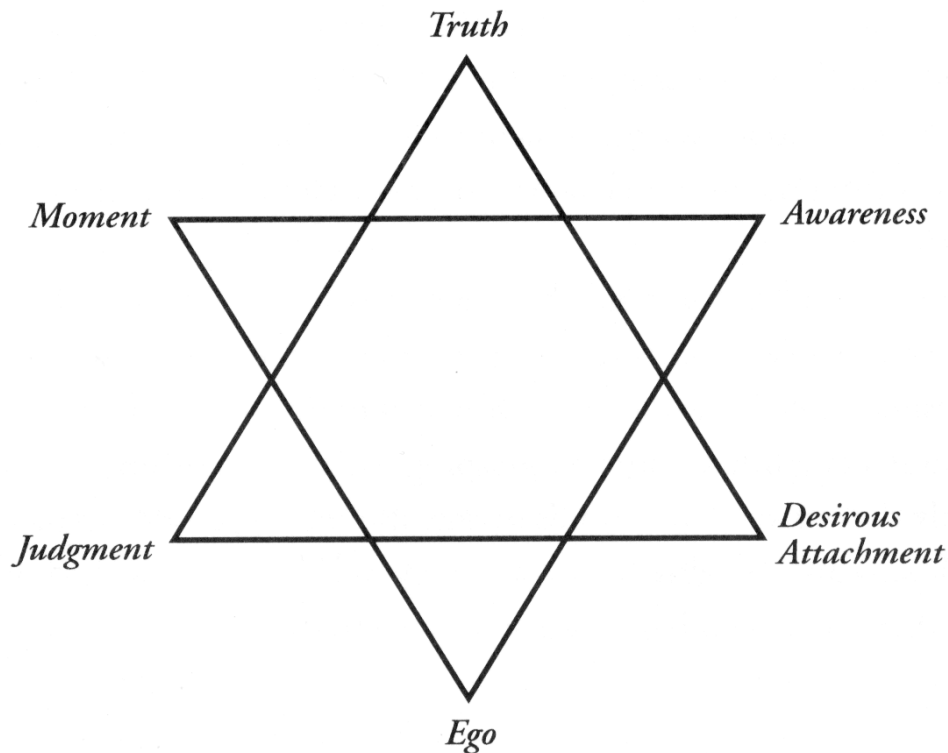


The Chakra System



The Tree of Life

This six-pointed star consists of two overlapping triangles pointing in opposite directions. The apex of the triangle directed downward symbolizes the material descending to earth, and the apex of that pointing upwards, the spiritual ascending to heaven. Also if one considers the heart as sitting on the top surface of the diaphragm, one can see how the three lowermost points of the six-pointed star indicate below the diaphragm while the three uppermost point upwards.



Opening The Heart: The Six Pointed Star

The three lower points can be regarded as representing three spiritually inhibiting properties of the lower charkas just below the diaphragm; judgment, attachment to objects of our desire (desirous attachment) and ego. The three upper points indicate three qualities of the upper charkas; truth, awareness and being in the present moment. The hexagon itself embodies love, crucial for

moving energy upwards. A main impediments to the flow of Kundalini energy are ego, judgment, and desirous attachment. The diaphragm is essential for pranayama, the control of breath, and pranayama is one of the most important techniques used by the Yogi to balance the sun and moon energies and get energy to move into the central channel and up into the higher chakras above the diaphragm. Not only does the diaphragm divide the lower from the higher chakras, but it is vital for raising energy into the heart chakra and up.

Self lies beyond ego. Judgment and desirous attachment are facilitators of the ego. When we do examine our inner selves in the space of judgment, we may find it truly wanting since there is no judgment in the place of true Self; judgment occurs in the space of ego.

Buddha taught that our ego-grasping and self-cherishing behavior are not only the source of all our misery but are the biggest deterrent to reaching nirvana and enlightenment. Only by doing things for their own sake rather than for an ego-based reason can we transform.

Judgment

"Judge not that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

Matthew.

"When you see a worthy person, endeavor to emulate him; when you seen an unworthy person then examine your inner self!"

Confucius

Modern medical research has shown that people who are critical and easily angered are more prone to certain diseases. Therefore, if for no other reason than our own sakes, we need to try and suspend our tendency to find fault. Judgment also takes us out of the present moment. If one is judging whether this is the best sunset one has ever seen, there is little energy left for being with the sunset. This space becomes occupied with the analysis of the event.

We spend much of our waking lives judging circumstances, situations, events and people. In doing so we are taken away from the nature of Self, since judgment reinforces ego. Unfortunately, to be effective in the Western world, it is difficult to get rid of judgment entirely. We need to judge and evaluate others to see if they can do the job and if not, we eliminate them from our frame of reference. It might be more appropriate to use a softer word, like discernment. On the inner journey into wilderness we can let personal judgment slide, since there are no deadlines to meet and no goals to achieve. The Bushmen have a gentle pace of life and possibly this is why judgment is not a big part of their behavior. When there is peace, calm, harmony and equanimity, judgment falls aside. When there is no judgment, peace and calm result. Noticing and being aware of one's breathing puts us immediately in touch with our mood. If we are anxious or upset, our breathing is shallow and rapid; if we are calm and relaxed, then so is our breathing. We can control our state of mind by controlling our breathing. We can change a feeling of being upset and harried to one of being tranquil and at peace just by altering the breath. If we can control judgment with a similar practice we can have a powerful effect on our spiritual progress.

"Self condemnation strengthens guilt, which is one of the greatest obstacles on the path of realization."

Sri Swami Rama

All spiritual traditions rest on a firm moral foundation and have tenets to reinforce righteous behavior. We cannot aspire to high ideals if we have a poor image of our character and behavior. Our own self-critical feeling that we are not good enough leads us to invest a lot of energy into judging others to compensate for our feeling of deficiency. Judgment of others and of ourselves makes us angry and takes away our power. We suffer more from judging another than the person who is being judged.

We can forgive others, their failings and idiosyncrasies if, at the same time, we forgive ourselves for something. We can make a trade, forgive and let it go as we forgive ourselves for a failing we do not care for in our own personality. This barter system might work a little more effectively, since being non-judgmental in a situation that evokes strong emotions can be extremely difficult.

Ayurvedic medicine or the science of life, believes that we have a basic nature or Prakriti. There are three main Doshas which can make up anyone's Prakriti. These Doshas are Vata, Pitta and Kapha, each of which represents a mind-body type. This is more sophisticated than the simple Western definition of endo, meso and ectomorph. Vata represents movement, Pitta metabolism and Kapha structure. The following are some of their characteristics.

Vata people typically are thin, bony and have tremendous energy. They are excitable, vivacious and anxious, and exhaust easily if they overexert themselves. They are hyper-excitable and, true to their Vata principle of movement, they move about a lot. They grasp concepts quickly, but are quick to forget. When out of balance they tend to display anxiety and nervousness.

Pitta people represent the typical mesomorph and have more strength and endurance. They have excellent digestive capacity and cannot miss a meal without becoming ravenously hungry. They have sharp intellect, are enterprising, become angry with stress, take charge of situations and are demanding, sarcastic and critical.

Kapha people tend to be endomorphic and strong. They have steady energy, but tend to put on weight easily. They have compassion and empathy and are slow to anger. They tend to wake up slowly, improve their mood by eating and have good retentive memories. They often remain attached to relationships and ideas.

These are some of the qualities of these three Doshas and we may have one or more operating in our basic nature. We are unable to change our makeup. If we try to be someone else and not true to our Dosha, we may go out of balance and eventually become diseased. Ayurveda gives many recommendations for keeping a particular Dosha in balance, by paying attention to whatever it is that gives our Dosha equanimity. There is no such thing as a good or bad Dosha; the Dosha just is! That is the way we are and the dosha is the body-mind card we were dealt when we were born. Some of us are single Dosha types and others can be a mix of di- or tri- Dosha. It is the dominant Dosha that is likely to go out of balance. Of these, Vata is the most active and most likely to be adversely affected first.

This mind-body classification can give us insights into judgment. If we can look at people in the light of their having a particular Dosha, we can forgive them more easily for some of their "faults." The overanxious, irritable Vata personality who has been excessively stressed, has not slept and is exhausted, no longer is seen as a jerk, but recognized as manifesting the signs of his Vata Dosha which is out of balance. Kapha personalities who have trouble getting up in the morning and constantly gain weight can be appreciated for their inherent Kapha nature instead of

being regarded as lazy and undisciplined. By the same token, we can recognize some of our own behavior patterns and not judge ourselves so severely for our own deficiencies. At the beginning of a trail one can introduce participants to this system so that they can all trek together more harmoniously in a non judgmental way.

One of the main principles of council circle is that;

"Whenever one points a finger there are three fingers pointing back at ourselves."

We are incapable of recognizing a shadowy quality in someone else unless it is a part of our own shadow as well. More often than not, judgment is a projection of our own shadow onto another.

Judgment can be positive or negative, and we are inclined to think that as long as we are saying good things no harm is done. Certainly praise is preferable to criticism, but it is still judgment. It has been my experience in the group setting that lavish praise can be just as harmful as strong condemnation. When we praise in a close-knit group we are comparing one person's performance to the others, and this can lead to a feeling of inadequacy on behalf of those not being praised. It may be more constructive to the group as a whole to take the individual aside and say what must be said in private, be it appreciation or otherwise. Many of us find it difficult to talk about our own feelings and often remarks in the circle gravitate toward praise for one or other member of the group, the trip, the day, or the leaders themselves. Although it is easy and agreeable to listen to this type contribution it often distracts us from the main object of the circle, which is sharing more intimately a part of our inner self.

We may need to take another lesson from the Bushmen in this instance. They have ways of keeping everyone humble and holding egos in check to maintain clan harmony and equanimity. Richard Lee, in his book "The Dobe Kung," describes what he has called "Insulting the meat." This is an indifference or even a negativity displayed to the good news of a successful hunt by members

of the clan. An accomplished hunter will tend to understate and be self-effacing and modest about what he has brought for the group, and the happy onlookers are more apt to say something derogatory about a kill. Even something as impressive as a giraffe may be met with a statement such as, "Do you expect this puny specimen will feed us all?" The hunter furthermore is expected to reply in a deferential way. This type of light-hearted bantering is vital in keeping more arrogant individuals in check.

The shadow archetype with its judgmental temperament is apt to come up in wilderness and can frequently be a disruptive force in the group. If the group has an understanding and awareness of the psychodynamics of this shady side of the ego self each individual can take responsibility for their shadow rather than assign blame and point fingers.

Desire and Attachment

Buddha taught that all is sorrow and desire that creates attachment is the main cause of our suffering. Just as we can create inner calm by noticing our breath and achieve peace of mind by not judging others, we could prevent sorrow and suffering if we could stop our desirous attachments resulting from our ego-grasping nature. Desire and attachment are closely linked, as it is the desire for something that leads us to become attached to it. Desire without attachment can be quite healthy. It is ego that leads us to want and acquire "things," and through attachment prevents us from letting go.

In the wilderness we can come close to the hunter-gatherer model, since we are separated from home comforts, modern conveniences and status symbols. In spite of this, many of us are still attached to the technology of our equipment, and conversations can easily gravitate around what kind of tent one has or how much one's boots cost. This takes on new significance in third world countries where the local help are doing well in sandals and short pants in situations where the rest of us in the same clothing would soon be hypothermic or frostbitten.

Hunter-gatherers own little and share everything. The Bushmen have a sophisticated system of gift exchange called Hxaro. Lee describes this as a delayed form of gift exchange, which is not necessarily equal in value. In this way goods circulate around the group and there is less chance of someone feeling deprived. The size or merit of the original gift bears no relationship to the size of the gift eventually returned. It is the thought and intent of the giving rather than its value that counts. The Bushmen are more interested in the social interaction than the gift itself. Wealth was measured more by how many times one gave and exchanged than by how much one actually kept. Food and water are never exchanged, but freely given. Lee also stresses that gift exchange is not the same as barter.

The Quechua people of the Peruvian Andes have a similar system called "Ayni." This means "Today for you, tomorrow for me." This system refers to a work exchange rather than a gift exchange. One day I help you till your fields, and on another you help me build my house. Again, the exchange does not have to be equivalent. The penalties of not reciprocating are severe and the culprit is likely to be ostracized from the community. However, no grudges are held and the moment reciprocation is instituted all is deemed well.

One of the advantages of trekking in exotic places is the knowledge one gains of local customs that can help us Westerners with our strained group interaction and trivial complaints. The visitor who is reluctant to share toilet paper can benefit from this exposure.

If we come back to Patanjali's Five Sheaths, particularly the Mind Sheath, we realize that these base emotions reside in the mind-body. Desires bubble up from the lower mind as do our emotions and habits relating to judgment. Judgment and desirous attachment are more a function of the mind-body and ego. Our intellectual body, or intellectual sheath, governs the mind-body; but in addition to this particular system of modulation we can replace these negative forces arising from "mind" with meditation, mantra (this can be the mantra of the sounds of the bush) and mindfulness. We cannot get rid of them, but we can become aware of how they control our lives, recognize them and let them go. A regular spiritual practice of one form or another will help us on our way. Since the inner journey into wilderness incorporates this principle and can become a profound meditation in itself, we can enjoy a sense of equanimity in nature and let go of our attachment not only to material objects but also to preconceived ideas and beliefs.

When we return to the essentials of what is involved in being in wilderness we can detach from desire, connect closely with Self and let our judgments fall away. We need only emulate mother nature's neutral stance, since just as she does not judge us, we should not judge others.

Our pain creates judgment and physical pleasure strengthens desire, causing attachment to "things." If we can remain in the middle path, not becoming attached to pleasure or pain, judgment or desire, our management of these difficult hurdles presented to us by the lower chakras can be overcome and we can live more readily in the realm of the upper chakras.

The upper chakras above the diaphragm can be represented by the qualities of truth, awareness and being in the present moment. Each in turn occupies one of the points of the upper half of the hexagon of the heart chakra which itself signifies love.

Truth is an integral part not only of the trek itself but also is manifest in the talking or council circle where the group shares feelings, insights, thoughts and experiences in a milieu of honesty, trust and openness. The talking circle is one of the most vital components of this inner journey and is an entire subject on its own. References are given at the end of the chapter for those interested in delving more deeply into this powerful form of meditation. Not only is it a way to heighten the group coherence but it is another way to relate to “the Field” or the Tao of nature.

Awareness is engendered by the intention of the group as well as gentle reminders of “inward bound” principles. To open our hearts we must be aware of and in control of our lower chakras and the sometimes undesirable qualities of, judgment, desirous attachment and ego. Once we modulate these, the heart opens and we connect with the present moment, truth and self-awareness through love. Now energy can move up above the diaphragm through the fourth, fifth and sixth chakras respectively, and ultimately to the seventh.

This is not just a theoretical dissertation on universal spiritual principles, but a practical way to enter the sanctuary of wilderness if one wants to connect with the higher Self of our inner wilderness. By paying attention to some of these concepts we can facilitate our journey on the path and that of our companions as well. The heart chakra, compassion and love are indeed the key to taking the high road in the wild outdoors and although unconditional love is a major hurdle for all but the enlightened, unconditional positive regard for others is more easily achieved. We need to remember that an aspect of the divine exists in each of us. We are all special.

The other techniques we can use to amplify our wilderness journey are as follows: connecting with the cosmos; meditative; dietary; group dynamics; nature and the five senses; shamanic techniques, and awareness of energy systems.

Connecting with the cosmos

Daily cycles

Celestial events

Seasonal changes

The four elements: earth, water, fire, air.

Meditative:

Mental

Relaxation

Reflection

Contemplation

Meditation

Breath work

Art

Writing

Poetry

Song

Prayer

Visualization

Physical

Yoga

Tai Chi

Dancing

Walking

Climbing

Swimming

Massage, body work

Zen-like minimum-

impact camping

Dietary

Avoid: Excess sugar

Caffeine

Alcohol

Meat

Food just enough and nutritious

Consider a fasting solo or vision quest

Group Dynamics

No judgment or lavish praise

Be aware of the shadow

Transcend ego -- humility

Control desirous attachment

Egalitarianism

Sense of community

Sharing

Truth

Awareness

Love or unconditional positive regard

No duality -- all for one, one for all

Wilderness ethics (leave no trace)

Nature and the five senses

Smells

Sounds

Sites

Touch

Taste

There are more than five senses and hence to appreciate the sixth and the paranormal we need:

Awareness of

Energy systems; the Chakras and The Tree of Life

Five Sheaths of Patanjali

Left and right brain, masculine and feminine

Light and dark

Other polarities

Signs and metaphors

Power animals

Archetypes

Shamanic techniques

Ceremony

Rituals

Chanting

Drumming

Sweat lodge

Pain

Vision quest

The power of nature involves the polarity we are able to see at any point during our journey. The balance of opposites is around us continuously: hot, cold; wet, dry; hard, soft; satiated, hungry; exhausted, rested; terrified, tranquil; windswept, serene; dark, light; lost, found; steep, shallow; high, low. In addition, we could add a range of opposing emotions we might feel as we walk the valleys and mountains; the deserts and jungles. With the meditative effect of wilderness and the help of the group we are able to integrate these facets like masterful mystics and stay in the middle path as ancient traditions have taught us. The wise trail guide balances these to the group's advantage. No one objects to slogging through the heat if camp is made next to a river and the day ends with a swim. The difficulties of a climb are forgotten if one has an awesome vista from the top. We have a different perspective of a grueling day if it ends in an exquisite meal. We can use the psychological effect of this dynamic to get the most out of our journey. Our basic human nature yearns for contrast to differentiate and feel alive, vital and vigorous. This is one reason why it is so easy to be in the present moment in the wild outdoors especially in a fresh, new and exotic place. The joy that results from this experience makes it easy to open the heart and contact the higher self.

Further Reading

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Conclusion

In view of our modern predicament is clear that we need a way to turn inward since everything around us is trying its hardest to turn us outward. We would prefer that the driving mechanism was not a crisis or catastrophe, that we do not have to become mortally wounded or sick in order to go inside. Whether it is a vacation in Hawaii or high-technology medicine, the modern day environment has pushed us into an almost exclusively outward direction and helped us forget the receptive, feminine, right brain side of ourselves. The seduction of materialism is powerful and will usually prevail unless we take conscious, aggressive steps to counter it.

If we are to look at replenishing ourselves we must look to techniques that lead to the intuitive, compassionate and empathetic, rather than exclusively to the intellectual and cognitive. Unfortunately, the trappings of modern day life will tend to lead us astray. Even vacations and holidays in nature are likely to result in the more outward, left-brain type of activity. Wherever we go to get away from it all, we seem to be confronted with more technology. If we go into the mountains to ski there are people, crowds, chairlifts and the latest in skiing and clothing equipment. If we find ourselves on the water there are boats, water skis, jet skiing, windsurfers and similar trappings to block the inner journey. If we go into the outback it is often with a four-wheel drive, a camper, cameras, generators and other paraphernalia to distract us and to keep us busy.

It does not matter whether it is ice climbing, mountain climbing or rock climbing; kayaking or caving, modern day consumerism dictates an acquisitive, left brain experience. The inner journey is difficult to find, but an awareness of what is required can help. Although some of these outer activities can be done in an internal Zen type of way given the right circumstances and mind

set, this is the exception rather than the rule. It is difficult for us to drop our goal-oriented, or ego affirming behavior. The ability to go inward on a regular basis will keep us whole and healthy. For some, the inner journey into the wilderness that connects to the primal self can be the most restorative. By healing ourselves in this way, we may be more able to help others heal themselves when we return.

Nature can be the panacea for anyone who is prepared to “get out there” because it is spiritually non-denominational and we can all avail ourselves of it without it offending our cultural conditioning. Furthermore it is available to most of us in North America and it is inexpensive.

The wilderness “effect” or wilderness rapture occurs when we come into contact with our higher selves while in nature. The higher we climb up the chakra system, the Tree of Life, or the hierarchy of our needs, the closer the contact with the true Self and the more profound the experience. The drive toward Self is primary and omnipresent even if subconscious in all of us whether we follow a spiritual path or not. Those of us who love wilderness know that this is a powerful vehicle for inner peace and harmony and seek it out as often as we can. We also all wish for a direct experience with the divine and hence the next question to ask is. Can we be in wilderness in a different way that will facilitate this need? Is it enough to just go into the wild and let “the mountains speak for themselves” or can we accelerate our growth process and advance more rapidly on the path of life?

We all have our own purpose on this planet and the challenge demands we find and follow it with gusto. If we ask the question...

"Death asks not, what have you?," but "who are you?" Life's question is not "what have I?," but "what am I?"

Swami Rama Tirtha.

we will come closer to our truth or vision of ourselves in this world and then realize as we progress along the trail of life that...

"When you find your place where you are, practice occurs."

Dogen

The seduction of materialism and consumerism is overwhelming today and these messages promise to be even more tempting as technology advances, leaving us little time for an inner life or life transforming experiences. The ego is king and with the help of media sophistication can be even more daunting. We are in the trenches, in the front lines and wilderness is fast becoming a major casualty. Where will we go to restore, replenish and heal? The enemy has many allies...

"The soul (higher self)... by reason of lust had become the principle accomplice in her own captivity."

Plato

"Wants, needs and necessities have different characteristics. It is want that is our enemy, and not the need and necessity."

Sri Swami Rama

"Desires are the source of our miseries. If all desires are assimilated by the one desire of spiritual attainment, then the purpose is solved."

Sri Swami Rama

"Greed is not stilled with money any more than is thirst with salt water."

Ksemendra

"By attributing worth to tangible objects, man becomes attracted to them; attraction to them brings desire for them; desire leads to competition and dispute amongst men. These reuse violent anger and the result is delusion. Delusion completely overcomes man's sense of right and wrong."

Srimad Bhagavatam 11,14.

A wilderness retreat even every three months will not be enough to maintain equanimity in the work a day world and we need to develop some small, meaningful practice of going inward to sustain us in between. The ego confronts us in many disguises one of which is the spiritual materialism and narcissism of the new age. It is like a chameleon and the different shades and colors it takes on can sabotage or hijack our progress. We may think we are progressing on the path when in fact we are not.

"Friend please tell me what I can do about this world I hold to and keep spinning out!

I gave up sewn clothes, and wore a robe, but I noticed one day the cloth was well woven.

So I bought some burlap, but I still throw it elegantly over my left shoulder.

I pulled back my sexual longings, and now I discover I am angry a lot.

I gave up rage, and I notice that I am greedy all day.

I worked hard at dissolving the greed, and now I am proud of myself.

When the mind wants to break its link with the world it still holds onto one thing.

Kabir says: "Listen my friend, there are very few who find the path!"

-- Kabir

or as Gampopa said;

"A mere glimpse of reality can be mistaken for complete realization."

We all ride the roller coaster of life between peaks and valleys, trying to remain as much as possible on the peaks of pleasure and avoid the valleys of despair, not recognizing that they are one and the same. We remain attached to pleasure or pain and have difficulty remaining in the middle path between, where neither extreme pleasure nor severe pain have emotional impact. We remain goal-oriented and outwardly directed. Judgment of others and desirous attachment to material possessions are hallmarks of our predicament.

There are many non-denominational tools that can be used to facilitate the spiritual path and help us turn inwards. In addition to meditation and prayer there are techniques such as Yoga and Tai Chi, which do not require adherence to any belief system. Just as a horse can be used to get us to our destination, these can as well. The horse is a vehicle of transport, not a religion, and there is no need to believe in or have faith in the horse. One can use it only as an instrument on the journey. This book demonstrates how wilderness and nature also are powerful instruments in helping us to reconnect with going inwards. None of these methods are mutually exclusive and in wilderness all of them can be used to augment the process.

It is only when we are committed to at least touching Self on a regular basis with some form of discipline that we may come to understand that...

"To know the real Self to be one's own is the greatest attainment, according to the scriptures and reasoning. To know wrongly the non-self, such as the ego, to be the Self is no attainment at all. One, therefore, should renounce this perception of taking the non-self for the Self."

Sri Sankaracharya

"God cannot be realized if there is the slightest trace of pride."

Sri Rama Krishna

"In the Samadhi (ecstasy) that comes at the end of reasoning and discrimination no such thing as "I" exists, but it is extremely difficult to attain, as "I - consciousness" lingers so persistently. This is why man is born again and again."

Sri Rama Krishna.

When we can connect with our Self in and nature we come to appreciate the principles of these statements. The outer wilderness helps us access the inner wilderness of our psyches

We can look at the dynamic simplistically in the form of a diagram.

HIGHER SELF

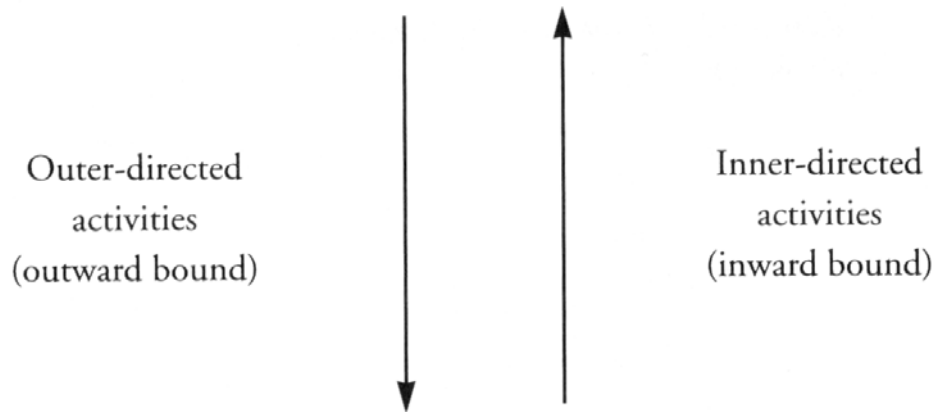
Holds its own center.

Does not depend on material objects.

Does things for their own sake.

Is the space of bliss and harmony.

Transcends ego.



EGO OR SMALL SELF

Depends on material objects or prestige.

Is goal oriented.

Never has enough.

Causes suffering.

Any inner activity will push us more in the direction of Higher Self. Activities that are outwardly and goal directed will move us into an ego orientation. If we can subordinate the ego, however, we might get a glimpse of the other reality..

"Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality; behind my purity was fear; behind my guidance, the thirst for power! Now they are vanishing and I drift. I come, mother, I come, in thy warm bosom -- floating wheresoever thou takest me -- in the voiceless, in the strange, in the wonderland. I come, a spectator no more an actor."

Swami Vivekananda

Few of us will attain such spiritual heights but we can aspire to do so and emulate the mystical masters of the past both in and outside of the wild remembering that...

"Wilderness holds the answers to questions we do not yet know how to ask."

David Brower.

Appendix

Core Beliefs and Energy Systems

Core Beliefs; Kundalini, Num, Kia, Cosmic Energy and the Peak Experience

“Whatever we see or don’t see, whatever exists, right from the earth to the sky is nothing but Kundalini. It is the supreme energy which moves and animates all creatures, from the elephant to the tiniest ant.”

...Swami Muktananda.

Since this book concentrates on the inner journey in wilderness it is important to develop a model where we are able to understand the dynamics of the transcendental event. The wilderness “effect” or wilderness rapture occurs when we come into contact with our higher selves while in nature. Understanding the “effect” requires that we learn more about other methods for attaining the higher self from spiritual sages who have perfected this in the past. If we want to have a deeper connection with our true selves using nature as a vehicle we need a map to follow the inner passage just as much as we need a topographical map to follow the outer journey.

The Kundalini energy is said to pervade the entire cosmos, be present in every particle and operate at every level. By coming to appreciate this power, we can gain understanding not only of ourselves but also of the cosmic energy of the planet and the whole universe. If we wish to develop our awareness of the “spirit that moves in all things” in the wild the more we know of psycho-spiritual technology the better.

Kundalini, and Kia (the trance phenomenon of the San) have many similarities and since San spirituality was born out of the wilderness it is vital to look at this in the light of the other.

Kia has been poorly studied not only because the San are hidden in the depths of the Kalahari but also because they had no written language and the magic has been handed on by word of mouth. It is clear, however, that Kia is another manifestation of the Kundalini energy that has healed and harmonized the San in Southern Africa for eons.

I have been questioned from time to time about the relevance of these ancient spiritual principles to the wilderness. The wilderness “effect” has never been clearly defined but its properties include; a feeling of inner peace, tranquility, oneness, wholeness, etc. This suggests that it is a spiritual phenomenon catalyzed by the multifaceted beauty of the wild. Maslow would have called this a peak experience. A Yogi or a Buddhist would call it by another name. Just as medical students must learn and be aware of the basic functions of anatomy, physiology, pathology and pharmacology in order to function as competent healers, we need a thinking framework in order to appreciate the transcendental journey through our inner and the outer wilderness. Medical students and doctors forget and never use much of what they have learnt but that does not invalidate the knowledge itself that can be retrieved any time it is deemed useful. Similarly if we are to talk about such lofty concepts as wilderness rapture, transcendental and peak experiences it behooves us to appreciate the ideas of spiritual giants that have preceded us. Also, on delving a little deeper into

these ancient wisdoms it is apparent that there is a core belief which permeates through all the teachings which we can carry with us on our own path as we trek through the sacred space of the wild outdoors and access our inner being.

Transcendental has been defined as beyond ordinary limits, beyond the bounds of human experience, connecting with the supernatural. This mystical event often promotes feelings of awe, wonder, at-oneness, harmony and inner peace. Maslow called it the peak experience. A similar phenomenon has been described in Eastern traditions as Samadhi or Nirvana. The difference between Maslow's peak experience and these more esoteric versions seems to be one of intensity and in the case of the Yogi, the ability to induce the event at any time and remain in that state as long as desired. The peak experience on the other hand is usually a very transient occurrence and when we try to hold onto the sheer pleasure of it, it disappears. We invoke our analytical left brain to maintain the wonderment and the minute we do so it is gone. Since the inward journey in and outside of nature often leads to mystical experiences one must consider the semantics of the process to appreciate it better.

According to Maslow, a peak experience occurs when we encounter transcendent ecstasy. Ecstasy is Greek for standing outside oneself. It is a change in consciousness implying transcendence or at least partial transcendence of the ego, and is associated with bliss. It is accompanied by emotional rapture, mental exaltation, vision of another world, a great mystical event, illumination, revelation, insight or awareness of becoming different.

Maslow found that since there was no effective way to describe the ineffable, most people never volunteered that they had these experiences unless directly questioned. We tend to forget, rationalize or trivialize some of our most precious moments. He noted that the two easiest ways to encounter a peak experience were through classical music and sex. There were numerous other

triggers, so many in fact that it became necessary to generalize rather than list them all. Natural childbirth was a potent stimulus, as was any event promoting pure joy and happiness, pure excellence, pure truth, pure goodness and pure justice. It is likely that the people Maslow studied were not wilderness enthusiasts since peak experiences are common in those venturing into the wild and the power of nature to evoke this response is not stressed in his writings. In the word "pure" is the implication that the encounter occurs for its own sake and there is no ulterior ego-related motive. He states that apart from the great classics of music; dance and rhythm, and especially drumming, are powerful stimuli, as are love, reverence and awareness of the body. Maslow emphasizes the importance of pain as another stimulus for experientially empty people who need a more intense catalyst to tune into their inner being. This may be an important factor operating in the wilderness setting as well. Mathematics, science and art can have similar effects to great music. The unraveling of a scientific mystery can lead to ecstasy in the investigator when a crucial insight proves to be correct.

The psychology literature seems deficient when it comes to describing mystical events and therefore we need to look at ancient traditions for greater understanding. In Yoga, Samadhi means ecstasy and is the final limb of the Yoga path. It is accompanied by complete sensory inhibition and sensory withdrawal with the merging of subject and object into a single experience.

It has been described as that phenomenon where, the knower, the known and the process of knowing are fused into one. Yogis have described it as having the intensity of "12 meditations." Samadhi occurs when one connects with the transcendental self, or Atman, and can lead to self-realization or liberation by transcending ego and thereby destroying the yoke or noose that limits our existence. The Yogi in this state becomes one with the cosmos and realizes that he or she is the

absolute as the psyche, or mind, merges with the higher self, or Atman. This state is accompanied by magical powers, one of which is control of heat.

"As salt mingles with and dissolves in water, similarly the merging of the mind and the self is Samadhi."

Hatha - Yoga - Pradipika.

In Buddhism, the concept of Nirvana is similar and comprises a meditative state of sensory withdrawal and ecstatic transcendence. Nirvana means extinction or emptiness and occurs when all thought and the ego personality are transcended and one becomes empty of a separate self. It is a state of complete inner stillness, "windlessness" or "non blowing" accompanied by total absence of sensory input. In this state there is cessation of desire, a condition in Buddhism equivalent to enlightenment.

"The Nirvana is a realm where there is neither earth nor water, neither fire nor air, neither ether nor consciousness... neither this world nor any other world, neither sun nor moon."

Buddha in the Udana.

In order to understand transcendence, ecstasy, the peak experience, Samadhi or Nirvana fully, we need to look at a psycho-spiritual model of its mechanism. It is through the Yoga description of the Kundalini energy that we can best come to understand the dynamics of these mystical states, which have similar qualities. Excellent descriptions of this sophisticated technology

are found in the Yoga literature. This becomes even more apparent with the availability of simple English texts translated from the Sanskrit.

Usually, before we can understand something we have to put language to it so we can begin to make sense of a concept. It is said that the Native North Americans were unable to see the first ships that arrived on the East coast of the continent, since they had no concept that these existed and no words to describe them. It was easier for their consciousness to ignore the vessels that were to bring their nemesis to the continent. Most of us subscribe to the doctrine of "seeing is believing," when often it is the other way around; unless you believe it first, you will not see it. A good example of this are the 3-D illusions by N.E. Thing Enterprises called "Magic Eye: A New Way of Looking at the World." "By staring into seemingly abstract fields of color, one can come to appreciate a remarkable 3-D image with astounding depth, clarity and color."

Without knowing this was possible and without having the technological background to present it to people, one could look at this abstract all day and never know what lay beyond. The same can be true of energy centers in the body: unless one is aware this is a possibility, one is unlikely to experience the subtle manifestations that easily are discounted. There is contemporary research using modern recording devices that confirms that experienced meditators are able to project energy out of these energy centers.

These manifestations are not always so subtle. When they occur in full force they can be so frightening and profound to the uninitiated that they can be misinterpreted as a form of psychosis rather than the natural flow of spiritual energy. Wilderness leaders and educators need be aware of some of the manifestations of this powerful energy so they are more able to appreciate and deal with it in the back country. It is even more apt to occur in those who enter the wilderness sanctuary for

spiritual reasons such a vision quest, where fasting and being alone can accelerate the movement of this powerful force.

Many people in the West now are practicing Eastern techniques such as Yoga, meditation and Tai Chi, and this phenomenon is becoming more commonly recognized.

Christina and Stanislav Grof have studied the subject extensively and formed a "Spiritual Emergency Network," which is their title for a Kundalini hotline. The Kundalini was first appreciated by Grof during his research with LSD. The arousal of such power can be terrifying to the neophyte, and many westerners may not be in a position to handle the emotions that result. Psychedelics are another way of experiencing the Kundalini and may help open the door for those who have difficulty breaking away from stale conditioning. However, once the door has been opened, then the real work begins.

"Drugs allow us to taste the beyond but do not make us masters of the transcendental."

Swami Satyananda.

Possibly an affinity with the mother earth and the cosmos has enabled the San to transcend and move this energy without the use of hallucinogens. Their closeness and attunement to the Kalahari together with clapping, dancing and chanting, create this powerful phenomenon. The Kundalini is potential female energy, or Shakti energy, waiting to happen. Close contact with the feminine dimension of mother earth may be the ultimate tool for contacting the higher self, and hence for self-healing and restoration.

When discussing wilderness rapture, we must go beyond modern day psychology to another model that is more complete, even if not completely scientific. We can believe it exists because it

is possible even today to witness the Kundalini phenomenon as well as some of its remarkable attributes, such as the ability to handle fire, to experience clairvoyance and to heal. Watching a San dancer handle fire and come out unscathed gives credence to a fact that something profound is happening even if we do not fully understand it. Kundalini, although a somewhat obscure subject to a conventional westerner, is the gateway to the transcendent and vital in helping us explain our own mystical experiences in and outside wilderness.

It has been said that any mystical event that occurs is the result of some movement of energy within this system. Since this is experienced subjectively, the manifestation of this spiritual force is likely to be different in all of us. Just because our interpretation may differ from the classical descriptions and may not sound quite as intense we should not discount it. It needs to be validated in the light of each person's own religious and cultural context. This is where the San may have an advantage. Since they could not read or write and their tradition is an oral one, apprentices of the Trance dance are not prejudiced by the descriptions of the past. Their only record from times gone by are the magnificent renditions of this form of spirit flight on the rock surfaces of the subcontinent.



The Chakra System

In Sanskrit, chakra means a wheel; the chakras in the body are felt to represent wheels of energy. There are seven main chakras that correspond loosely to autonomic nervous plexuses or nerve stations found along the spinal axis.

Nadi in Sanskrit means a stream, and nadis are ducts or channels along which the life force travels as a current of energy. These nadis are similar to the meridians described in the Chinese acupuncture system and in Taoist literature. There are at least 72,000 nadis in the body, and some say as many as 300,000.

There are 13 main nadis, and the three most important ones originate at the base of the spinal axis two fingers above the anus where the first chakra is situated. These three most important nadis are called the Ida, Pingala and Sushumna.

The Ida begins on the left and is the pale, cool, or moon (Tha nadi) representing the feminine. It also corresponds to the para-sympathetic nervous system that contracts or restrains.

The Pingala on the right is the red, hot or sun (Ha nadi) that represents the masculine. It corresponds to the sympathetic nervous system that expands or facilitates.

In the Western medical understanding the para-sympathetic and sympathetic components of the autonomic nervous system balance control of automatic bodily functions. The meaning of Ida and Pingala goes way beyond the simple control of bodily functions. Sushumna is the central and most critical nadi and runs up the axis of the spine. This is the pathway for the Kundalini. Sushumna begins at the base of the spine and travels all the way up to the crown of the head where it ends in the seventh chakra four finger breadths above the crown.

The Ida and Pingala wind around the Sushumna helically and meet at each chakra. They end behind, and between the eyebrows, at the sixth chakra and then travel to the left and right nostril respectively. The Ida, or feminine principle therefore is present in the left nostril, the Pingala, or masculine principle, is present in the right nostril. This is the basis of sophisticated Yoga breathing techniques called pranayama, that rely on balancing the energies of the masculine and the feminine, the sun and the moon, the Ha and the Tha (Hatha) by utilizing each nostril in different ways.

Usually consciousness is dominated by the sun and moon nadis, and the life force or prana moves up and down the Ida and Pingala, leading to externalization of attention. With the use of pranayama (breath control) as well as other austere Yoga techniques, prana or the life force can be directed from the Ida and Pingala into the Sushumna or central axial channel causing

stimulation of the Kundalini energy which resides there. It may be no coincidence that the Ida and Pingala spiraling around the Sushumna and meeting at these chakra points resemble the DNA helix described by Watson and Crick, and this may have relevance to vibrational changes that occur at a cellular level during different states of consciousness. The Kundalini principle is thought to pervade every atom in the cosmos and therefore must also apply to our cellular molecular structure as well.

The Kundalini is potential female energy that lies dormant in the central column at the base of the spine and is represented symbolically by an archetypal serpent.

The seven chakras can be described as follows: The first or root chakra, resides in the perineum or at the anus and corresponds to the earth element. This is where our fight or flight reaction occurs. It is our energy center for survival.

The Ida, Pingala and Sushumna, the three main nadis, originate here, as does the Kundalini serpent power.

The second chakra is situated in the genital area and corresponds to the water element. This is the center for procreation and propagation of the species and is regenerative.

The third chakra rests in the solar plexus and corresponds to the fire element. This is where ego, ambition, achievement and vanity arise, and it is the seat of anger. It is with this chakra we manifest our power base in the world, and this eventually will determine who we become in a materialistic sense. It is with this chakra that we conquer the challenges life presents to us.

The first three chakras all are manifested in the first or Food sheath of Patanjali. These three are very much part of the physical body and how it functions. They are below the diaphragm and have been called the lower chakras.

Ascending above the diaphragm one enters the realm of the higher chakras. The fourth, or heart chakra, represents the air element. This is the chakra of love, empathy and compassion. The

symbol of this chakra is the six-pointed star or hexagon that is identical to the Seal of Solomon or Star of David seen in Kabbalah.

The fifth, or throat chakra, is the place of the ether element. This is the seat of creative expression in speech, sound, poetry, mantra, writing, art, dance and dreams.

The sixth chakra, or third eye, is behind and between the eyes. Here lies our intuitive sense, or ability to have paranormal powers. This chakra represents the sixth sense and is important for the clairvoyance of the shaman or the hunter-gatherer. It is also this chakra that may give us a “gut” feeling, which if acknowledged and acted on can keep us safe in the wild outdoors. Once one's Kundalini energy has risen this far, siddhis or magical powers are gained. These are thought to deter enlightenment if they become an end unto themselves.

The seventh chakra, or crown chakra, is the center of enlightenment, Samadhi or Nirvana. This is the place of the transcendent experience and is where Ananda or Bliss and Unity consciousness occur. This is where the individual self dissolves and the observer, the observed and the process of observing become fused into one. Even greater magical powers occur in this space of the thousand-petaled lotus. Shiva, the male principle, resides here.

The hunter gatherers are in continuous and intimate relationship with four elements; earth, water, fire, air and do not have far to go to enter the realms of the ethers, the paranormal and the transcendent. Possibly this affinity to the elements enables them to move the Kundalini so expertly. We can also experience this connection and a feeling of complete harmony and inner peace after being in wilderness for extended periods. As the energy in our chakras moves upward into and beyond the heart we may experience fleeting glimpses of this “unity consciousness” where the “I” becomes “We” and the group perceives itself as a single unit. In psychology jargon the consecutive phases of team growth or group interaction have been described as “Forming,” “Storming,”

“Norming” and “Performing.” In the first three phases “I” predominates. It is only in the last phase of performing that “I” falls away and the “We” of the group takes precedence. This is true for the group process in wilderness as well at a more profound level as nature works her magic on our chakras. It would be a misstatement to say that this group phenomenon in any way resembles the ecstasy achieved when the seventh chakra is opened but it is interesting to speculate on the mechanism of the disappearance of duality as the team process matures.

The Kundalini energy is potential female or Shakti energy and is represented symbolically by a coiled snake twined three and one-half times around the base of the central column, or Sushumna nadi. Here it remains with its tail in its mouth blocking the flow of energy in the central channel until the energy is balanced between the Ida and Pingala, or feminine and masculine nadis. Exquisite balance allows prana or energy to be directed into the central column. This awakens the sleeping serpent, or Shakti energy, and the Kundalini rises up the central column or Sushumna. If the serpent power is fully activated it ascends, charging and energizing each chakra as it goes.

When Shakti and Shiva meet at the 1,000 petaled lotus, Samadhi occurs. The peak experience described by Maslow has similarities to this.

A good example of this form of peak experience is described beautifully by Laurens Van Der Post when he returned to the South African bush after the war:

“Out of the bush, on a footpath leading to the river, stepped an enormous kudu bull with horns so tall and wide and heavy that only pride enabled him to keep his head in the air. As I saw him, he saw me, and he stopped without any trace of alarm; over the spangled grass we stared at each other...

And then, it was if all the chains of a kind of slavery dropped from me with such a rush that they tinkled and rattled in my imagination. Suddenly, I had finished with the war, and a great rush of emotion swept over me that was impossible to describe except that all its urges and manifestations met in a wordless cry "I have come home!"

One can appreciate the profound healing that occurred in this peak experience described by Van Der Post. Words cannot fully describe the power of it, as is the case with most significant mystical events. The fact that it occurred in nature is relevant to the power that nature has to move this energy within us and to heal us. Healing is occurring at the deepest level of existence. It is vitally clear in Van Der Post's description that, in that moment in time, he and the kudu bull became one and that this unity consciousness was expressed in the statement, "I have come home!"

It is not unusual to encounter an animal in the wild and for a brief moment fuse with it because one is in an altered state of consciousness. It is here that the animal, the wilderness trekker and the process of observing can all become one experience. The native Americans were keenly aware that when out in nature, for extended periods, with the right intention, this could occur. In this way an animal could become a totem power animal that vested the questing individual with its unique qualities.

The key to moving the Kundalini energy upward is the balance of the female and male energies, the Ida and the Pingala, the cool moon and the hot sun. This bears a strong resemblance to the Western psychological approach of right brain (feminine) and left brain (masculine.) In Yoga the word Hatha describes it well. Ha is the sun and Tha is the moon. Yoga represents balance of these two principles.

The chakra model is similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The lower three chakras encompass his descriptions of "Deficiency" needs. Only when these have been fulfilled can attention be directed to the "Growth"-oriented needs. Deficiency needs are related to stability, security, protection and procreation, and only once these are satisfied can Growth needs be invoked. The Deficiency needs are reflected in the qualities of the first three chakras below the diaphragm and Growth needs by those found in the higher chakras above. If Deficiency needs become over emphasized and distorted as the only reality, this can block progress towards self-actualization. Maslow's Growth needs involve qualities such as love, self-esteem, aliveness, justice, truth, etc. The highest of these needs are self-actualization followed by self-transcendence or the peak experience. Here, the individual transcends to clarity, euphoria, holism and understanding, coming closer to the true self and a sense of his or her own being. Maslow's thinking was probably influenced by the Yoga model since he was familiar with Eastern philosophies. Only once our Deficiency needs have been taken care of are we able to enter the inward journey without reservation.

In Maslow's hierarchy, self-esteem and self-sufficiency are just above love and belongingness and it is on these former qualities that Outward Bound and similar organizations concentrate. In fact they use the mastery of our base, deficiency, survival needs on the lower rungs of the ladder as a means of growing towards self-esteem, self-concept and self-sufficiency. These can lead to self-awareness. It is self-awareness that helps us understand the limitations of ego and enables us to ascend the hierarchy or go beyond the third to the higher chakras.

When one thinks of healing, one looks to the healing profession and to the physician whose symbol is the Caduceus. Hermes was the messenger of the gods and the patron of heralds. He carried a gold Caduceus given to him by Apollo when they became friends. The Caduceus is a staff

around which two serpents are intertwined and at its top is a pair of wings. In Greek mythology this staff was a sign of power like the scepter of kings. The heads of the two serpents coming together signified talk of negotiations after warfare had ended, and the wings, the speed of the herald or messenger.

If one looks at the Caduceus it is not difficult to see the exact replica of the chakra system and the three main nadis, the Ida, Pingala and Sushamna; the left; the right, and the central column. Each one of the serpents winding around Herme's staff can be thought of as representative of the Ida and Pingala. The staff itself represents the central column, or the Sushumna. Furthermore, each serpent crosses and meets the central staff in exactly six places representing the six chakras. At the sixth chakra, the serpents eye each other. The sixth chakra is where Ida and Pingala end before deviating to their respective nostrils. The seventh chakra is represented by the wings at the top of the staff. The wings above, rather than signifying the speed of the messenger, seem more symbolic of the seventh chakra, the 1000 petaled lotus in Yoga, which exists four fingers above the crown, is the place of bliss consciousness and whose manifestation is pure light. The connection between the archetypal serpents of the Caduceus and the chakra system is striking.

Hermes represented many of the facets of the light and the dark. He was a complex figure who was a wanderer and bringer of luck, but also a thief with an astute mind. He became the god of herds and shepherds and could tell the future by lots. He therefore was in control of his third eye or sixth chakra. He made the first lyre and gave it to Apollo as compensation for the cattle he had stolen from him. This creative musical talent indicates that his right brain activity was fully functional. Apollo, in gratitude, made him chief herald, giving him the gold staff. Hermes also was the god of fertility and luck and was closely associated with the earth. He was a symbol for

individuation since he was a master at balancing the light and the dark: the right and left, the Ida and the Pingala, the feminine and the masculine.

Unfortunately the medical profession has chosen Aesculapius (or Aesclepius) as its symbol, a symbol of a staff with only one snake winding around it. To me this signifies the direction the profession has taken; one of reliance on the left brain and an attempt to make medicine a pure science rather than the healing art it is. We have forgotten his daughter-helper Hygea who represents the more feminine, compassionate, intuitive polarity, represented by the second snake on the Caduceus.

Physicians are offended by Hermes because he embodies some of the aspects of the dark side. However we need to understand that our shadow side is a vital part of our being and it is through the shadow that we can come to understand the light. We need the right as well as the left, the dark as well as the light. The message of Caduceus embodies the same core belief of the balance of opposites that has relevance not only to self-healing and wilderness rapture but to any of the challenges we undertake during life's journey.

"The Kundalini in the form of latency is coiled like a serpent. One who impels this Shakti to move will attain liberation" Hatha Yoga, Pradi Pika.

It was felt by the Yogis that all that exists in the universe also exists in the human body -- as is the macrocosm, so is the microcosm. By recognizing the truth of the human body and our own selves we can come to recognize the truth of nature and the entire universe. Kundalini is felt to be female energy, or Shakti, existing in latent form, not only in every human being but in

every atom of the universe. The purpose of Kundalini Yoga is to awaken this cosmic energy and unite Shakti with Shiva to attain pure consciousness, which is the same consciousness that pervades the whole cosmos. It is felt that every spiritual experience is related to the unfolding of this energy. When pure consciousness, or bliss consciousness, occurs all sense of duality disappears and unity consciousness results. In this way the truth of the experience can be extrapolated to the truth embodied in the entire universe.

Bija or seed sounds are primordial sounds which are extremely important for arousing the Kundalini energy. The complex chants used by the Kalahari San in their healing ceremonies probably incorporate all of these primordial sounds. They seem to be a sophisticated, orchestrated rendition of the bush mantra heard when one listens to the magical non-human voices of the Kalahari night. The Kundalini is thought to be the origin of primordial sound as no doubt is nature herself.

The basic mechanism of the Kundalini experience is an increase in vibrational energy perceived as heat. As Kundalini rises up the spine from one chakra to the next, the vibration or volatility increases. In this way, the solidity of earth can become the liquidity of water, which then can become gaseous, air-like and finally ether-like. This change from earth to water to fire to air to ether, or solid to liquid to gaseous to ether, occurs as Kundalini energy rises up from the first to the second to the third to the fourth and fifth chakras respectively. The Kalahari San also have represented this vibrational energy in their rock paintings as a series of zig-zag lines moving up the body. This profound change in energy that must extend itself to every atom and every cell in the body, may be the secret to the adepts mastery of heat or cold. The Kundalini moves in a spiral and one could speculate that the spiral structure of the DNA molecule protects it from heat damage as the “vibration” of the cell approximates the “vibration” of fire.

Each chakra functions as a transformer and accelerates energy onwards and upwards to the next chakra. When the Kundalini energy rises all the way up the spine to the seventh chakra, the process is complete and the Kundalini can discharge itself, travel back down the spine to reside at the root chakra until its next awakening.

The trance dance or healing dance of the Kalahari Kung San is a Kundalini phenomenon. The only difference between the Bushmen experience and that of the Yogis is a lack of sophisticated written language to describe it. The San experience is all the more remarkable because other than their attunement to the earth and cosmos and their delicate way of social interaction, they have no esoteric mystical practice to induce this state. Neither do they use psychedelics, except to help a neophyte break into this advanced state of consciousness if he is having difficulties with the dance. Once the apprentice has made this shift the catalyst is no longer used.

One of the qualities of Kundalini energy is the ability to control heat. Tibetan Yogis were known to be able to dry wet sheets on their naked bodies in the icy environment of the Tibetan mountains. Similarly, the Kalahari San can control fire and are able to place their body parts in fire without being burned. Another facet common to Yogis and the San is the large body experience. Here the person in trance travels out of body and on looking down at his body on the earth, perceives it as being huge or elongated. This experience has been rendered beautifully on rock surfaces by San artists over the ages.

One aspect of Tantra Yoga, is the belief that one rises by that which one falls. Sexual energy is felt to have enormous potential, and the energy of sex can be raised to a higher level of awareness. Maslow acknowledged that sex was one of the most powerful means to induce a peak experience. In Tantra the sexual union of male and female energies simulates the mystical union of Shiva and Shakti. As the male and female embrace one another their individual egos dissolve

leading to transcendence. Now there is no difference between the two, and the male and female, Shiva and Shakti, are one with the universe. In this way peak experiences or deep emotional connections can occur during sexual intercourse.

Wilderness rapture encompasses many mystical experience ranging from a simple feeling of calmness and harmony to the peak experience. Some other manifestations of Kundalini are outlined in the table.

Expressions of Kundalini and Kia

Heat rising up the spine.

Mastery of fire.

Creeping sensations; tingling.

Trembling.

Paralysis -- falling.

Spontaneous movements.

Light experiences; inner sounds; smells of perfumes.

An empty mind.

Paranormal powers; intuitive knowledge.

Out of body experiences.

Large body experience.

The San term, "Num" is their word for Kundalini and Kia would correspond to samadhi, nirvana or satori. It is induced by clapping, singing, chanting and dancing around a fire. Usually, it is the men who dance around the fire while the women generate the energy of the dance with their clapping, singing and chanting. An older woman often tends the fire. In addition, the rhythm of the dance is facilitated by the use of rattles wound around the legs of the dancers.

The dance is primarily a healing ceremony for individuals who are ill and for the group as a whole, where it diffuses tensions that tend to accumulate. By connecting with the ancestral spirits, the lesser gods and even the Great Spirit, paranormal information is made available to the shamans to assist in the healing. The shaman cannot approach the spirit world unless in this altered state of consciousness. During the dance the energy intensifies as the singing and clapping become more intense. The dancers may become stiff or rubbery and may stagger, shiver, shake or fall. Often the dancer convulses and screams. After the dancer falls and revives he goes to each ailing person, laying on hands, pulling out the sickness and shaking his hands towards the heavens, entreating the spirit world and casting out the illness into the darkness. The dancers sweat profusely and may have a blank or glassy stare when all thought becomes suspended.

The San believe that Num was given to the Kung San by the gods. Those who can heal possess Num, which resides in the pit of the stomach (in the Taoist tradition, the Hara, the origin of the vital force Chi), and at the base of the spine (in the Yoga tradition the seat of Kundalini power.) Num heats up and becomes a vapor, a description identical to that of the Yoga tradition. Num then would rise up the spine to the base of the skull where Kia occurs and the healer travels out of body to the spirit realm on behalf of the patient.

Kia seems to be the Yoga equivalent of Shakti meeting Shiva at the crown chakra. As this vibrational energy rises up the spinal column, the spine tingles. According to the one shaman's

description to Richard Katz: "Num makes your thoughts nothing in your head." With Kia, one could see into people and diagnose the illness. One could also leave the body to visit family members far away and to scout game. Immunity from the harmful effects of fire are part of the power of Num and Kia. Shape shifting into animals has been described, the most powerful shamans becoming lions.

Num songs stimulate Num and open the healer's heart. Most likely they contain all the qualities of primordial sound so important in Yoga for balancing and stimulating the chakras and nadis. The chanting, singing and clapping is unique and, in the context of the Kalahari night and the flickering primal fire, has tremendous power. The Yogis knew that these primordial sounds activated the Kundalini, and San healers are well aware of the importance of women in generating the energy of the dance with this form of sound. Comparisons between the Yoga and San experience are outlined in the table.

Comparisons Between Kundalini and Kia

Kundalini	Kia
The serpent power residing at the base of the spine which can rise up to the crown and cause ecstasy.	The trance experience of the Kung San. An out of body experience where Num energy rises up the spine and comes out the top of the head.
A mystical event which helps attain self-realization.	Used for healing and harmonizing the group.
Three knots must be pierced for Kundalini to rise. The heart is the hardest.	To Kia the heart must open.
Attained by Patanjali's eight-limbed Yoga.	Induced by clapping, singing, dancing, chanting, rattles and the primal fire.

Herbs used by the guru to facilitate the process.

Num plants used to help the initiate enter trance.

Shakti meets Shiva above the crown chakra.

The soul leaves out of the top of the head.

Magical powers can be a hindrance to personal growth.

Paranormal powers help the group, e.g. to hunt.

Dietary taboos essential. They are vegetarians.

Avoidance of meat only temporary.

Can induce in disciples by energy transference.

Teacher can induce Kia by shooting invisible arrows.

Resides at the base of the and in the pit spine

Num resides at the base of the spine of the stomach.

The Yogi attains God world consciousness in Samadhi

The shaman will only enter the spirit while in Kia.

Numerous old texts on how to move Kundalini energy.

Handed on by oral tradition.

Advanced Yogis attain it with effortlessly.

Experienced shamans can Kia easily more control and effective healing.

Primordial sounds facilitate the process.

Num songs critical.

Part of recorded history.

May go back 30,000 years or more, as depicted in early rock art.

The Bushmen agree that male Num and female Num are the same. The female equivalent of Kia is more controlled and less dramatic. Trembling is a key component of it. Whereas males require a long period of learning and it is difficult for them to Kia, females could acquire Num and Kia in a few days. Any female who wanted Num was believed to be able to get it. However,

pregnancy interrupted Num and a woman could not concentrate on healing until the child-bearing years were over. It was for this reason that more males were healers than females. With most, the power would leave as one became older; however, in some women it remained and became even stronger. It was thought that females often had the strongest Num and this might develop as they became menopausal.

Descriptions of the trance dance given to Katz by healers included a feeling of becoming oneself again, unfolding, unwinding, untying oneself, spreading oneself apart or feeling oneself again. Num was felt to make your heart sweet. All of these have some of the attributes of a peak experience and of Samadhi, or bliss or unity consciousness. Similarly, in Kabbalah the highest sephira, Keter the crown, is the place of "I am that I am."

A vital quality of the healers was that they were able to tap into the right brain function more easily. In other words, they were more in touch with the feminine side of brain activity. Katz described this as being more emotionally labile, more expressive and passionate, and having a body image or self-image that was more determined by inner states than by anatomy. He felt they had easy access to a rich fantasy life and that they were more intuitive than they were logical. Possibly this is the reason that the women were able to trance more easily than the men, required only a brief apprenticeship and often were the best healers.

This transcendent ability of the San seems at least in part related to their close connection with wilderness and all the facilitative properties it possesses. The fact that, unlike the hunter-gatherers of the Americas, they do this without hallucinogens is all the more remarkable. For those of us interested in the multifaceted experience of nature, there can be no better model for us than the hunter gatherers and especially the San. We can aspire not only to their technical expertise in the wild, or the so-called "hard skills" but also to their advanced mystical and magical abilities which

arise out of the softer approach of tapping into the feminine dimension not only of themselves but also of the earth mother and the cosmos.

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Kabbalah, the Tree of Life and other Core Beliefs

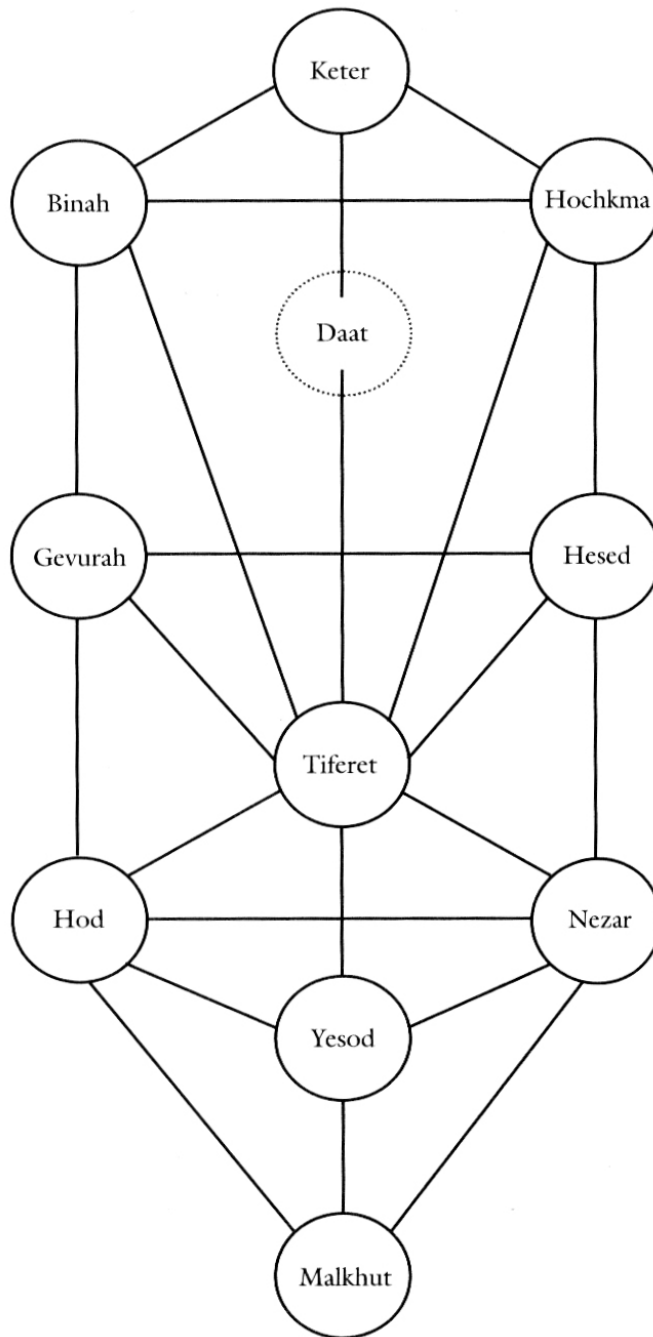
“It is a Tree of Life to those who hold it fast, and all who cling to it find happiness. Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.”

... Maimonides

Kabbalah is the Jewish mystical tradition and has characteristics that can be compared to those found in Yoga and, to some of the ecstatic states of the San. It seems that the language of the Kabbalah is universal and archetypal with a similar core belief of opposites, as well as other principles of spiritual truth found in many traditions. If we are to connect with our inner being in or outside of nature, a reaffirmation of these principles can help us on our quest. Furthermore our spiritual relationship with nature is so complex that the more models we explore the greater will be our understanding of wilderness rapture or the wilderness “effect.” The Kabbalistic Tree of Life is an ancient archetype and is symbolic not only of our relationship with the transcendent but with our connection with the earth mother as well. It is another map to look at as we explore the topography of ourselves in and outside of nature. The Tree is our link between heaven and earth and is a good metaphor for the inward bound journey that seeks to link the two.

The Tree of Life is composed of three limbs and three principles: Will, which holds the balance; Mercy, which expands, and Rigor, which contracts or constrains. These three principles are represented in the three vertical parts of the tree. On the left is severity, passive force and

constraint or constriction; on the right, mercy, active force and expansion, and in the middle, the main trunk of the tree, equilibrium, grace and will.



Tree of Life

The tree is composed of ten sephirot and 22 pathways between the sephirot. These sephirot are in some ways analogous to the chakras in Yoga and represent centers of force or energy. The crown or topmost sephira, Keter, is equivalent to the seventh chakra, the crown chakra and represents all that was, is and will be; "I am that I am."

The left pillar of the tree is passive, receptive, watery; it is blue in color. This is similar to the Yoga nadi of Ida, which represents the feminine, cool or moon component. The Kabbalists call the feminine force the Queen. The left, or passive pillar, of the Kabbalistic tree represents restraint and contraction.

On the other side, the right hand pillar, is the active, fiery, or red side of the tree that involves active expansion. It is similar to the Yoga equivalent of Pingala which represents the masculine, hot, or sun nadi. The Kabbalists call the masculine force the King.

The central or main pillar of the tree represents equilibrium, grace and will, and is the balance between the left and the right. In Yoga its equivalent in the body would be the Sushumna or central nadi. There are four sephirot in the main trunk of the tree. Beginning from above downwards, Keter, Tiferet, Yesod and finally the lowermost Malkhut. Daat, which means knowledge and is just below Keter, is not a true sephira. This is where knowledge from God can enter directly possibly as a sign of grace. Energy travels down the tree from Keter at the top to Malkhut at the bottom, traveling from center to right to left, from center to right to left, and continues down in this order until it reaches Malkhut. Similarly, energy can travel in the opposite direction upward from Malkhut to left to right and so on, eventually ending up in Keter. Going downwards the energy sometimes is called the lightning bolt, due to its zig-zag character and direction.

Keter the highest sephira is the place of the absolute, "I am that I am." It is the equivalent of the crown chakra in the Yoga.

The next sephira down is Tiferet, the heart of the tree, and is the place of aesthetics, beauty, adornment whose sign is the Seal of Solomon. It is similar to the heart or fourth chakra -- whose symbol is also a hexagon -- but also has some of the characteristics of the fifth.

Below Tiferet is Yesod -- foundation -- which is representative of the ego. Implementation of our goals and objectives occur here, and its equivalent is the third chakra.

The lowest sephira of Malkhut is the kingdom. This represents nature and therefore also manifests in us as the human body. It contains the four elements of earth, water, fire and air.

Just as Yoga has the concept of Kundalini, or the female Shakti energy, Kabbalah has the concept of Shekhinah, the feminine aspect of the divine. The Shekhinah resides at Malkhut.

One aspect of Tantra Yoga is gaining access to the seventh chakra and bliss consciousness by the act of sexual union, represented by the embrace between the female Shakti and male Shiva. Kabbalah also has its Tantric equivalent. Shiva and Shakti, the masculine and the feminine, are equivalent to God and Shekhinah involved in a cosmic sexual embrace. Shekhinah, therefore, seems to have its equivalent in the female Shakti Kundalini energy, whereas God has its equivalent in the Shiva or male principle.

The demonic creatures were created from the start to test goodness, right and wrong. These evil forces are not really evil and Satan is in fact one of the sons of God. Lucifer was created to head the forces of dark and challenge virtue. This concept fits well with Jung's concept of the archetypal shadow. It is only through our shadow that we can come to see the "light" part of ourselves; both are an integral part of our makeup and the shadow part cannot be denied. It is a part

of our psyche that must be recognized for what it is and dealt with at an appropriate level. This is especially relevant in the wild where the shadow or dark side of our personality is apt to come up.

The Garden of Eden is the original blueprint or the archetype of nature's sacred space. Here, God placed both the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, of good and evil. The description of the creation is also a description of the different polarities; the heaven and the earth; the light and the dark; the earth and the seas; the masculine and the feminine.

In the beginning, before the serpent tempts Eve to eat of the Tree of Knowledge and Adam follows suit, the two of them are living in a state of naive bliss with everything provided by the garden. They are the same as children who, in their simplicity, are pure and have not yet developed their ego sense -- their third chakra -- or the sephira of Yesod. Knowledge of the fruit changes this dramatically and they first become aware of their nudity. After they cover themselves and hide from God, God challenges them with their crime, the punishment of which is that woman will suffer the pain of childbirth and will be dominated by man. Man will till the soil and from that time on...

"...cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shall thou eat of it all the days of thy life ... in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground..." Genesis 3:17.

This description has changed little up to the present day and is symbolic of our being bound to the power of ego, which demands we make our way in the world in a physical and materialistic way. It is only the true hunter-gatherer who may have escaped this sentence and lives in relative bliss off the earth mother. Statistics have shown that hunter-gatherers like the San are blessed with more leisure time than we could ever dream of having. Recently, however, this has been changing as the few hunter-gatherers left, rapidly are run out of their gardens of Eden. Even those who have a small place left in the garden have eaten of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which can be

thought of as representing the ego, and creating the monster of consumerism and materialism. In their innocent-like state, the hunter-gatherers are even less capable than we are in integrating the wonders of modern-day living into their daily lives and usually end up consuming the one thing they can barely afford -- alcohol. This, as Carl Jung pointed out, is another, though unfortunate way of connecting with "spirit."

God also placed another tree in the Garden of Eden, The Tree of Life. We are still able to return to Eden by embarking on a journey up this tree. Just as we came down the tree as a lightning flash to become manifest in human form at the sephira of Malkhut, we have the option of doing the lightning flash in reverse by conquering the serpent wound around the trunk of the tree, transcending the ego of Yesod and reaching the higher sephirot beginning with Tiferet. With devotion we may even reach Keter, at which point we can enter Eden again in a state of Yehud, or unity consciousness and bliss, recognizing as before that "I am that I am," as we connect with our divine self made in the image of God.

Genesis 3:22, "And the Lord said; Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now lest he put forth his hand and take also of the Tree of Life and live and eat forever. Therefore, the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way to the Tree of Life."

On our wilderness quest we can enter the garden again and by our practice win over the cherubim so that they lay aside their flaming swords and allow us to regain our birthright which is access to our divine nature. For some of us that do not ascribe to any religious philosophy this can

most easily be done in the context of nature herself rather than through any austere, esoteric tradition as long as we learn the principles these paths have to teach us. We can use these tenets as tools to help us on the journey rather than as a set belief to adhere to. In addition we can use the hunter-gatherer as our model because they embrace many of these principles and until recently were still the closest to the Garden of Eden experience. The principles they embody are a humble demeanor or lack of ego, lack of judgment in the group, unconditional love for their children, minimal attachment to the material and being in the present moment with themselves and their environment.

The only way back in, is the way we were driven out. We have to embark on a long and arduous journey to realize again what we once had ...

"We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time." T.S.Eliot

On the other hand we have an advantage over the San in that we left the garden long ago and have had more opportunity to wend our way back. The San are only now beginning their difficult trek out and their trail leader is the ego. They have a long way to go until they understand the complications caused by this new leadership and recognize what they left behind.

Tiferet, the heart of the Tree, and the equivalent of the heart chakra, represents self-awareness and it is at Tiferet that one can stop spiritual growth and remain in the materialism that exists below this sephira. One can have comfort, power and prestige, but no propensity for spiritual growth. In Yoga the equivalent would be focusing all energy in the lower three chakras below the

diaphragm. According to Maslow, this would be the same as never growing beyond our Deficiency needs.

Kabbalah, affirms that our desire is to return to Eden from whence we came. This is the equivalent of the search for the higher self of the Yogis, or self-realization. Ancient Kabbalistic drawings of the Tree of Life reveal a serpent coiled around the pillar of equilibrium. According to Kabbalah, the hero must conquer the serpent coiled around the central trunk of the tree in order to attain Keter or enlightenment. Kabbalah, like other ancient traditions, describes its own archetypal journey of the hero; and the serpent coiled around the central trunk can be compared to the Kundalini serpent coiled around the Sushumna nadi blocking the flow of spiritual energy with its tail in its mouth. The snake or ego was our downfall but conquering it can be our salvation.

It is not difficult to find similar mystical and spiritual qualities in Yoga, Kabbalah and amongst the San hunter-gatherers. We can use these principles to facilitate our spiritual adventure in the wild outdoors. If we were to look at one environment that is multi-factorial and provides the maximum benefit one would require for spiritual development and self-actualization, the choice would have to be the wilderness or nature. Here one easily can connect with the four elements. Earth, water, fire and air are close at hand; when you need them for survival they take on a different significance. We are able to master the first chakra if we spend enough time in nature, where we can experience the flight or fight reaction in its true form, rather than in the way we are accustomed to dealing with it in modern day life: as state of chronic, low grade panic.

We can recognize our power base and our ego strength in the third chakra, or in sephira of Yesod and exposure to the challenges of the wild is an excellent tool for gaining self-mastery and self-esteem. It is likely that if we can raise the energy above Yesod or above the diaphragm to the

higher centers we can come to know our place of truth in the universe; the Hebrew word for which is Tikun.

If we are to make use of some of the principles of ancient traditions in wilderness, the key factor we can distill out of the mass of information available, is the concept of a core belief. This permeates through all the different disciplines; Right side and left side of the Tree of life, right brain, left brain, Ida, Pingala, Ha, Tha, Ying, Yang, contraction, expansion, light, dark. We are able to recognize and appreciate a plethora of opposites in nature and the wild outdoors and it is in balancing these that we come to find our own center.

San and Bantu healers in Southern Africa make use of bones for divining and one can distinguish the same principles of polarity and balance we have seen in other mystical traditions. There are bones for male and female, strong and weak, sickness and health, plenty and poverty, evil and good.



Divination Bones

Eduardo Calderon a Peruvian shaman worked by balancing good and evil which he did from the base of his Mesa (table). On the Mesa he would lay out power objects in a set pattern. The good artifacts were on the right, or the light side; the evil were on the left, or the dark side, and the middle field was the mediating center between them. Many of the northern Peruvian shamans work through the same principle of balancing the two forces. This balancing of opposites is archetypal and translates into an essential conviction that is universal. It is also true to the symbolism of the Caduceus.

Eduardo explained that the field to the right is the field of justice, and the left is the field of evil. The field of justice is where Christ and all his saints dwell; Christ is the main force that erases all negative influences. The field of evil contains all the negative forces, and one must look here for

the cause of the problem. This may occur as a result of sorcery or a natural malady. Depending on which it is, a different power object on the left side of the Mesa would vibrate, and this vibration could be identified only with the shaman in an altered state of consciousness, with the third eye opened by a potion containing among other plants the hallucinogen mescaline found in the San Pedro cactus. One could make a diagnosis with the help of San Pedro, and the treatment for the problem also was made available to the healer with the help of San Pedro. In the center of the Mesa was the mediating center, which balanced the opposing fields and was responsible for the balance of the Mesa.

It is significant that the San Pedro cactus bloomed at night and, therefore, it is at night that one uses the power of the plant and its vital energy. Amongst the San the healing or trance dance also stops shortly after dawn. The San involve themselves in all night rituals, especially during the summer months when the weather is warm. It would be difficult to believe that these ceremonies could hold as much power if done outside of nature and without the tools she is able to provide the shaman.

The Candelabra or Trident near Paracas in southern coastal Peru has strong similarities to the Tree of Life. The Trident, which is etched on a hill in the desert sands, resembles a huge cactus. It is a massive figure, 600 foot long and 200 foot wide, and has changed little in hundreds of years. Some scientists have linked it to the Southern Cross. Erik Von Daniken speculated that it was a sign for extra-terrestrial spacecraft pointing the way toward the enigmatic Nazca lines further south. However, an extra-terrestrial using it as a beacon would miss the lines by 150 miles.

The Candelabra is an archetypal cactus like figure with three limbs like the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. The balance between the left and right limbs of the cactus leads to integration that is

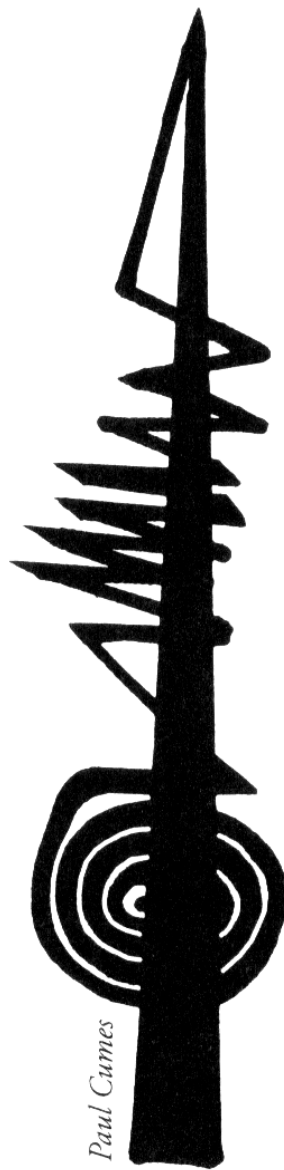
the key to knowledge and self-realization. This occurs when one reaches the top of the central column of the trident. This cactus like figure can also remind us of the properties inherent in the San Pedro cactus which has helped shamans access the supernatural for millennia.



The Candelabra or Trident of Peru

There is another fascinating figure in the Nazca sands south of Paracas called The Needle and Thread. It is a quarter of a mile in length and consists of a central column and a zig-zag line which crosses it 16 times. The figure has a spiral at its base from which the zig-zag leads. The zig-zag criss-crosses the column as it travels up, and ends at the pinnacle of the column. It can return down the axis of the column to join the spiral again. At first sight the figure looks very mysterious, but it does not take a lot of imagination to find similarities between this and the chakra system or

even the lightning bolt of the Kabbalistic Tree. The spiral could represent potential energy waiting to be discharged, much the same as the Kundalini serpent is coiled in the central column of the Sushumna. The zig-zag line symbolically is the same as the flow of this force up the spinal column and has been depicted in similar fashion by the San in their rock art.



The Needle and Thread

Although there are differences cross culturally in the symbolism, the deeper meaning of the process is the same. In one way or another, energy is moved upwards by various esoteric practices and techniques. To the Yogi it is Kundalini Shakti meeting Shiva at the crown chakra in Samadhi. To the Kabbalist it is the path up the Tree of Life to Keter. To the San shaman it is Num rising up the spine and blowing out the base of the skull with Kia. To the desert shaman of Peru, the dynamic was depicted by the Needle and Thread and also the Trident or Candelabra which so much resembles the Tree of Life.

Wilderness rapture is profound and we are able to understand this better if we look to these wonderful examples of wilderness art arising out of the original nature religions. There are examples of rock art left by the ancients all over the planet.

If we encounter them on our sojourns into wilderness an appreciation of the powerful forces leading to their inspiration and manifestation can help us in our own meditations when we visit these areas of sacred space.

Some of the San rock art in Southern Africa showing different aspects of the trance dance and trance like states can be dated back 30,000 years, and it is clear that these spiritual practices must have predated the recordings in ancient Yoga scriptures or those written down by the Jewish mystics. Just as humanity began in Africa, it might be that the Southern African continent was the place of sophisticated psycho-spiritual technology long before God made a covenant with Abraham or the Yogis began to practice eight-limbed yoga. These practices may have facilitated the formation of mystical roots in other traditions beyond the so-called "Dark" continent. They also arose in the context of nature and the earth mother, and if we are to reconnect intimately with this power it is useful to learn from the wisdom of the past. We cannot separate our experience in the wild from the inherent qualities invoked by nature's ability to move the spirit within us. No doubt if

we spent all our time in wilderness we would need an outlet for this overwhelming feeling of oneness and if we had no conventional art technology would want to express our transcendent experiences somewhere on the parchment of the earth's crust with the tools and dyes provided by the wild.

Since few of us can live permanently and intimately in the wild outdoors if we want to facilitate her healing energy we need to design an effective, even if not spontaneous strategy to maximize our retreat.

One participant in a workshop I once gave was somewhat concerned about the "recipe" I was giving for touching the transcendent within us. I would prefer to look at it as the understanding of a certain dynamic with which each of us can then do what we like. The most important principle is to try and remove our old conditioning so that nature can get on with the job of healing us. In any event the effect will never be predictable and all we need is a way to open ourselves up to all possibilities.

The Bhagavad-Gita states; *"Whatever being comes to be, be it motionless or moving, derives its being from the union of Field, and Knower of the Field; know this!"* The more we can know about the field of nature, the cosmos and about ourselves, the better.

We can balance left and right brain activity and attain "whole" brain function. For those of us who are more left-brained in inclination, we can concentrate more on right brain stimuli such as those obtained during soft skills and soft fascinations. By learning from the San Bushmen we can make full use of primordial sound, singing, dancing, chanting, clapping, the primal fire and their enlightened social interaction. The chakra system of the Yogis can help us appreciate that we have a sophisticated energy body not described in conventional, anatomical and physiological texts that we can stimulate and balance with the use of different esoteric techniques. These do not have to be

bizarre or extraordinary, but certainly breath work and meditation are easily in reach of most Westerners.

The Kabbalists have given us the Tree of Life with its emphasis on wisdom, understanding, knowledge, mercy and justice. Kabbalah like all ancient traditions rests on a firm, moral foundation and incorporates many of the properties described in the Yoga tradition of chakras and Kundalini. With some of this knowledge it is likely that we will be able to amplify, magnify and facilitate our own wilderness experience and take it to new depths and greater heights. Some knowledge of these ancient wisdoms that understood the mechanism of transcendence can be of great assistance to us on our inner journey into nature and into our own inner wilderness.

Leisure time in nature mixed with non-directed attention for soft fascinations can facilitate this process. If we can relate to the heart, the fourth chakra, with compassion, empathy and love, we will more easily be able to gain access to the fifth chakra and express ourselves through song, dance, writing, poetry or any other form of artistic expression. In the Kabbalistic sense we will have reached Tipheret.

The San of old were prolific painters and their sacred wilderness art is all over the rock faces of Southern Africa. Their intimate connection with the mother earth and the cosmos gave them access to these higher chakras, including the third eye, or sixth chakra which they used for intuitive and paranormal knowledge. Many San still obtain access to the seventh -- the crown chakra -- in their spirit dance. One can still witness this phenomenon today in the Kalahari desert. Music and the primordial sound of Num songs provide the San with an easy vehicle for altered states of consciousness. If one adds to this the mantra of bush sounds from insects, birds and animals, as well as all the scents and smells that abound in the wild, one can realize that the desert wilderness meditates the San, rather than the other way around.

Aromatherapy works on the basis of smell-evoking memories and just as all original sounds come from nature, so do all original smells. Incense has been used to promote religious or mystical experiences. Sage is an integral part of the Native North American sweat lodge and other ceremonies, and its power to a large extent must be related to its unique and subtle scent. Other smells and scents in nature may help induce a change in consciousness in the wild.

According to Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of healing, the Kapha Dosha, or mind-body type, responds to scents and smells. Vata Dosha are more receptive to hearing, responding to sounds such as water flowing or of the wind in the trees. Pitta people relate to visual beauty. Whatever our need is, according to our mind-body type, nature has more than enough depth to cater to anyone.

Since the San are so close to the basic essentials of life it is easy for them to be completely in the moment, as mystics have been throughout the ages. Just as the Jewish mystics, the Chassidism, used ecstatic dance to achieve altered states of consciousness, so too are the San masters of ecstatic dance and with that can have powerful out of body experiences and heal the rest of their group. Moreover, the wilderness of the Kalahari, and any other wilderness, affords solitude, silence and contemplation. One of the most important aspects of San life is the community -- to the Buddhist, the Sangha. This results in a high level of ethical conduct, and in terms of the San society is an advanced form of democracy and egalitarianism. They have social techniques of keeping members of the group humble, and egocentricity is not a big part of their life. Unlike western society, ego does not play a prominent role in the functioning of the group; in fact, egoistic tendencies undermine the fabric of the group's harmony and are discouraged. Any social system that de-emphasizes the role of ego will facilitate access to the higher self.

All religious traditions are founded on a strong basis of ethics. One cannot contact the higher self without good moral conduct. If we immerse ourselves in the wild as a group with the right intention, practical ethics seems to arise spontaneously as a way of helping the group move safely through the challenges and dangers. It is possible that for this reason alone the San have developed an impeccable level of mutual interaction. They certainly have no written code of behavior as do all ancient traditions.

In no other place is self-responsibility as obvious as in wilderness. One's mistakes become glaringly apparent and there is no one to blame for them other than oneself. In this way wilderness leads to a type of Zen mindfulness. The concept of minimal impact camping and "leave no trace" is also very mindful and Zen-like in character. Add to this a healthy diet and a tendency to go hungry and possibly starve for brief periods and one has other vehicles for transcendence. Although the San rarely use them, other hunter gatherers make use of plant hallucinogens readily available in nature to help them enter the cosmic realms.

Entrainment is a natural consequence of living in the wilderness. This occurs when all of our "Five Sheaths:" Physical, Energy, Mind, Intellectual and Bliss Sheaths (Patanjali) are in harmony and we have physical, emotional and spiritual balance. Izack Bentov, in his book "Stalking the Wild Pendulum," noted that pendulums that are started swinging in different rhythm soon "entrain" and swing together. People rapidly tune into the rhythms of nature, the seasons and the phases of the moon. Women in a group often will menstruate simultaneously. All of this is a natural result of an extreme form of harmony which can result from extended contact with wilderness and with one another in the right environment. Ayurveda also stresses being in harmony with the daily as well as the seasonal cycles for optimum health. It is hardly surprising that

wilderness leads to transcendence, peak experiences and self-transformation, along with other profound changes in states of consciousness because it has the ability to "entrain" us with the cosmic rhythm and heal us at the deepest level.

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