



Prakriti



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**An Exhibition on
Man in Harmony with the Elements**

February–March 1993



Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts
New Delhi









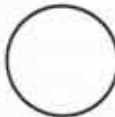















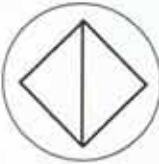


Held in the open air, the exhibition on 'Prakriti' is the fourth presentation of the IGNCA's conception of viewing fundamental concepts on a universal theme that cut across diverse cultures, disciplines, religions and social strata. The three previous exhibitions were on Space, 'Kham', Form, 'Akara', and Time, 'Kala'. These exhibitions reaffirm that these concepts are universal archetypes, rooted in man's common heritage.

The exhibition on Prakriti evokes the experience of the integral vision of man and nature. The five elements, earth, water, fire, air and ether/space, provide a matrix on which the holistic worldview of traditional societies is based. They form the basic vocabulary of creation myths, sacred rituals, creative expression in architecture, and the understanding of the human body. Here man lives in harmony with the cosmos.

Today the relevance of these early perceptions is because they have an inherent awareness, intrinsic to man's symbiotic existence—a view that contemporary ecological thinking revalidates. The exhibition re-evokes the traditional perceptions for the mutual benefit of both.

The exhibition was preceded by a year-long series of seminars at the national level, culminating in an international seminar on the same theme: Nature and Man—an Integral vision. Prakriti is the flowering of the cycle of exhibitions on fundamental categories. This publication is tribute to the universal heritage. It will serve as a remembrance, whose fragrance will be savoured through these pages.

Symbols of the Elements

Tradition	Earth	Water	Fire	Air	Ether/Space
Hindu	 Yellow	 Blue	 Red	 Green/Grey	 Colourless
Buddhist	 Yellow	 Blue/White	 Red	 Green	 White/Blue
Chinese				 (Wood)	 (Metal)
I-Ching/Tao					
Greek					

Articulations

All the ancient civilizations of the world namely Hindu, Chinese, Christian, Greek and Islamic describe the elements, earth, water, fire, air and ether in their respective texts. These descriptions occur in the context of their cosmologies and creation myths. This goes to show the cross-cultural universality of the elements.

Hindu Thought

*As the one fire has entered the world
And becomes corresponding in form to every form,
So the Inner Soul of all things
Is corresponding in form to every form, and yet is
outside.*

*As the one wind has entered the world
And becomes corresponding in form to every form,
So the one Inner Soul of all things
Is corresponding in form to every form, and yet is
outside.*

*As the sun, the eye of the whole world,
Is not sullied by the external faults of the eyes,
So the one Inner Soul of all things
Is not sullied by the evil in the world, being eternal
to us.*

Katha Upanisad 5. 9-11.

*In the beginning, the Golden Embryo arose. Once he
was born, he was the lord of creation. He held in
place the earth and this sky. Who is the God whom
we should worship with this oblation?
When the high waters came, pregnant with the
embryo that is everything, bringing forth fire, he
arose from that as the one life's breath of the gods.
Who is the god whom we should worship with this
oblation?*

Rig Veda 10.121.1

*From that Brahman was born space, from space,
air, from air, fire, from fire, water, from water,
earth, herbs, from herbs, food, from food, man.*

Taitireya Upanishad 2.11.1

Chinese Thought

*Heaven, being one, created water. Earth, being
two, created fire. Heaven, being three created
wood. Earth, being four, created metal. Heaven,
being five, created earth.*

*Earth, being six, created water. Heaven, being
seven, created fire. Earth, being eight, created
wood. Heaven, being nine, created metal. Earth,
being ten, created earth.*

Zhouyi Zhenkang Chengzhu
XICI ed. Wang Yinglin

Islamic Thought

*At the beginning you should correctly grasp
the substance of the first elements.
God created things from no things
in order thereby to manifest His power.
He brought the substance without trouble or time.
A shining fire came forth,
between water and wind, along with dark earth.
When fire fell into movement,
its heat brought about dryness.
Then cold appeared from the unmoving,
and wetness grew up from that coldness.
Once these four elements fell into place
God used them for the realm of two or three days.
He combined the elements one with the other
and they put up their beads in every kind.
The quickly circling dome appeared,
displaying wonders ever new.
The seven days became lord over the twelve
months-each assumed an appropriate place.*

Shahnama of Firdawsi d-c-a-411/1020

Greek Thought

According to Orpheus water was the origin for the totality of things, and from water slime was established, and from both of them was generated a living creature.

Athenagoras

Ether was the first to be separated off, next fire, and after that earth. From the earth, as it was excessively constricted by the force of the rotation, sprang water.

Empedocles

Just as our soul, being air, holds us together, so do breath and air encompass the whole world.

Anaximenes

This world, which is the same for all, no one of gods or men has made; but it was ever, is now and ever shall be an ever living fire, with measures kindling and measures going out.

Heraclitus

Fire lives the death of air and air lives the death of fire, water lives the death of earth, earth that of water.

Heraclitus

Buddhist Thought

O Ananda! The following six are the elements of the manifest creation particularly of living beings. earth, water, fire, air, ether and consciousness.

Majjima-Nikaya I.125

Christian Thought

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light... And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning one day. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called the Seas: and God saw that it was good.

Genesis Chap. 1. Old Testament.

COSMOLOGY

In most cosmological accounts, water is the primeval element most often chosen as the 'ground' for creation. Water is the vital life-sustaining force that supports every level of existence, survival and growth. In other words, it is the basis and foundation of the universe. About 500 recorded myths from all over the world testify to the creation-survival-destruction cycle through water symbolism.

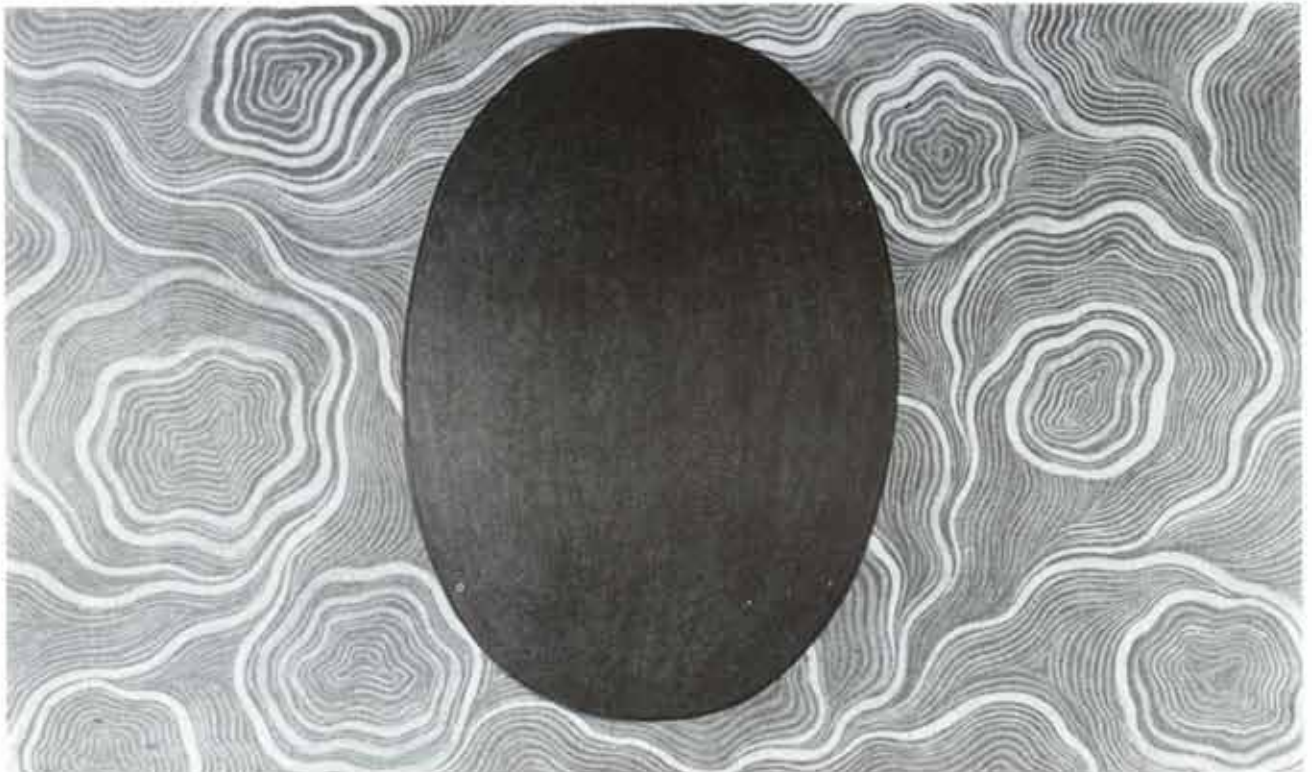
Of this universe it is in truth the waters that were made first. Hence, when the waters flow, then everything here whatsoever exists is produced.

Shatapatha Brahmana 7.4.1.6

In almost all traditions of the world, the notions of cosmology are intricately connected with man's integral perception of the world around him. The elements are the basic building blocks of all physi-

cal life, and in almost all cosmogonic myths across the world, they are the material basis of creation.

Indian cosmogony has variations on the theme of water, as conveying primordial divine energy



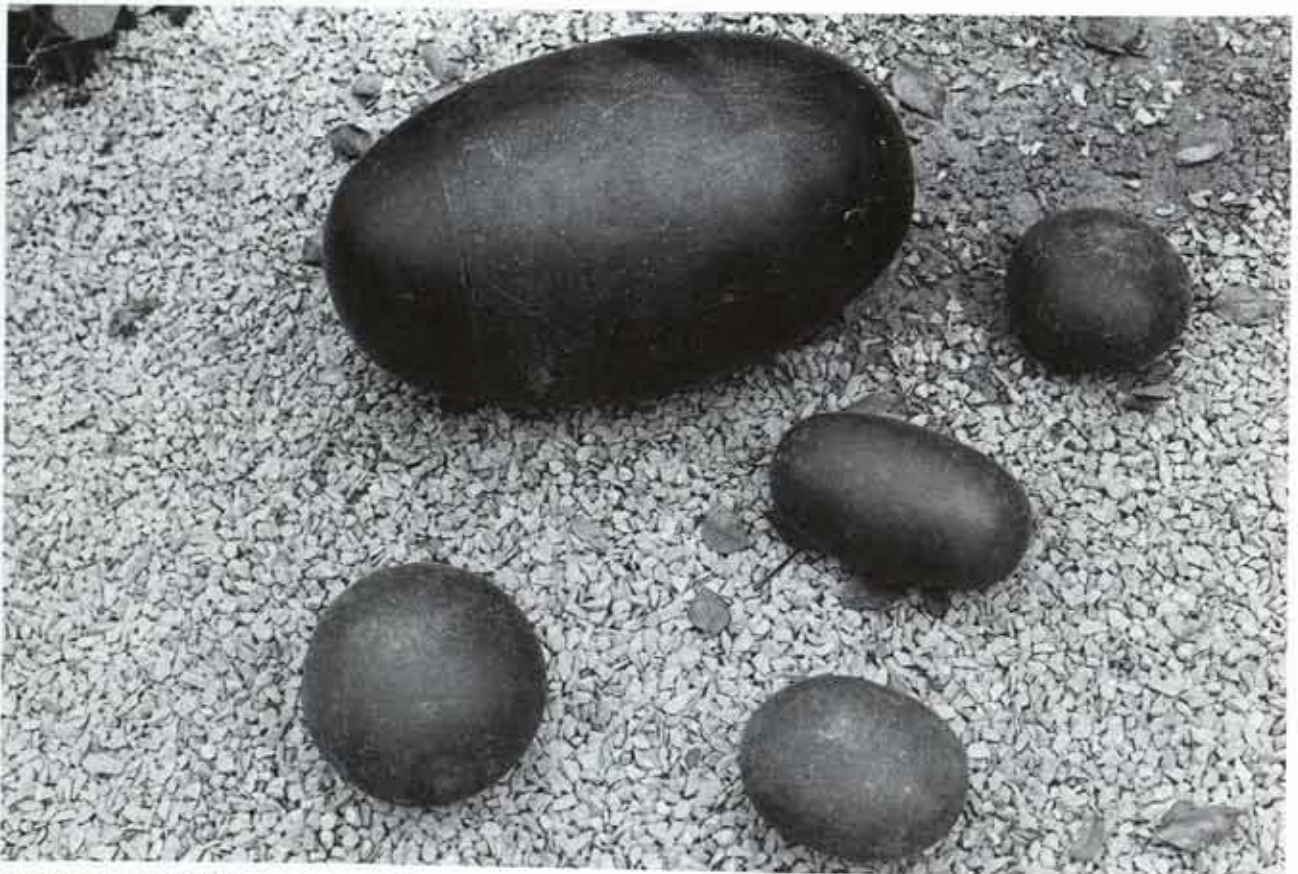
Hiranyagarbha. The cosmic egg floating in the waters of creation. Painting in gold, Kangra. c. 1775-1800 AD

and as a vehicle of creation. All ancient cultures award primordial status to water. The Vedas reveal the process of creation through the mystic concept of the cosmic egg conceived by the primeval waters. This golden germ *biranyagarbha* becomes the source of golden light, the Sun God, the seed of creation.

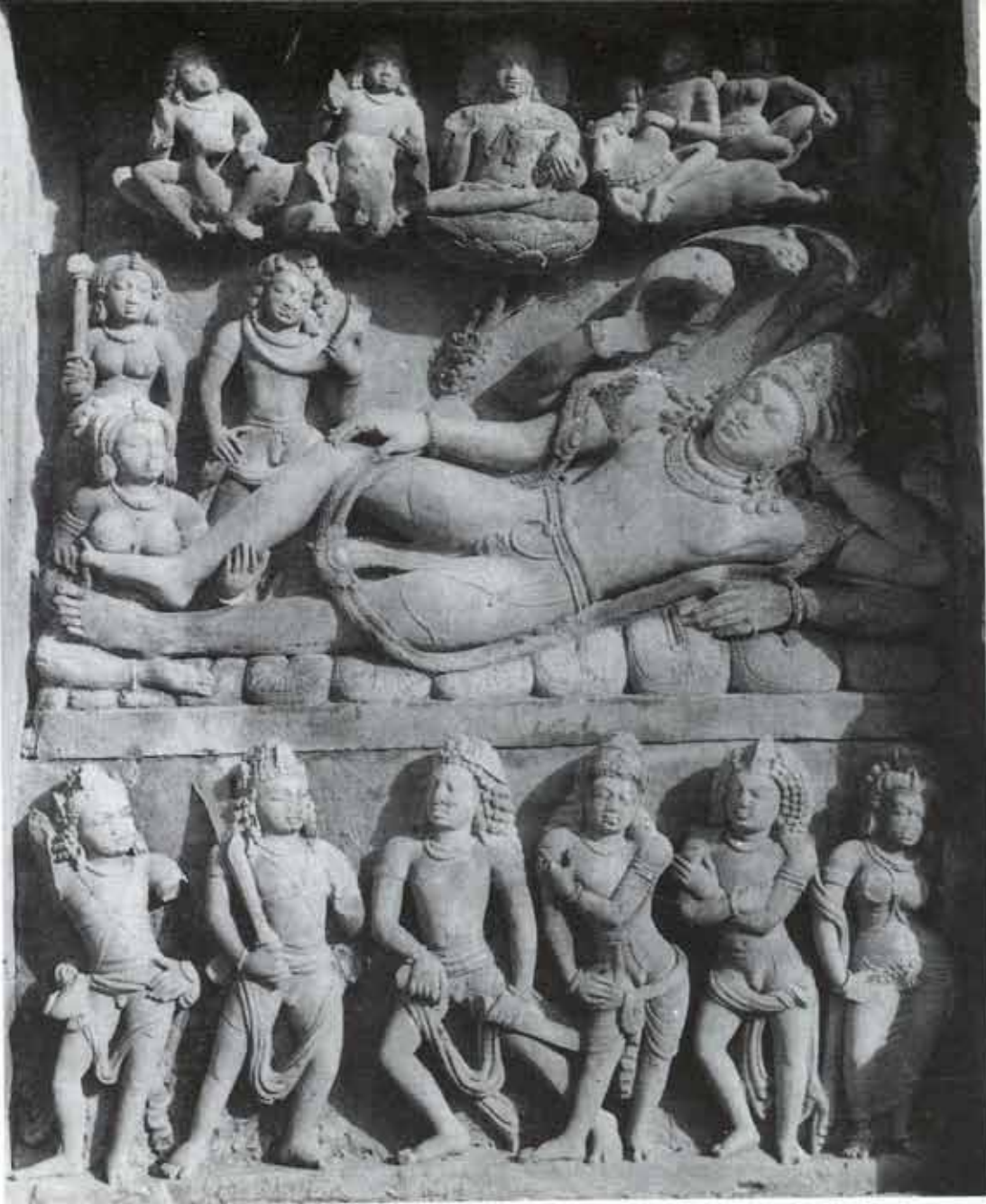
The universe arises from primeval waters of creation. This unpolarised oceanic state creates the cosmic egg of the whole creation *brabmanda*. According to the myth recounted in the *Rig Veda* (10.121), the Golden Egg floated on the seamless surface of the cosmic waters of creation. This egg is described as *svayambhu* or the self-originating world egg. The egg co-mingled with a nucleus of fire contained in the seed of creation that split the shell into two halves. These halves migrated to opposite directions. The upper half became the heaven and the lower became the earth.

The image of the self-originating world Egg with aquatic origin is directly connected with natural stone icons, the *banalingams*, the *svayambhu lingams* and the *shalagrama*, sacred to Shiva and Vishnu.

The concept of the egg created from divine waters is a recurrent motif in a great many different versions in the ancient and primal cultures. One tribal version of this archetypal myth is found in the creation myth of the Hrusso (Aka) tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, India. They believe that at first there were nothing but two eggs. They were soft and shone like gold. They contained an inherent energy which impelled them to rotate. At last, as they went round, they collided and both broke open. From one egg came the earth and from the other emerged the sky, her husband. When the sky made love to the earth, every kind of tree and grass and all living creatures came into life.



Cosmic egg and Shalagramas. stone. contemporary.



Vishnu floating on the great cosmic water of creation; Deogarh, Madhya Pradesh, 6th Century AD..

The classical Puranic tradition translates the myth of creation from the waters in the image of *Sheshayi* Vishnu floating in the primeval waters with a lotus issuing from his navel on the pericarp of which sits Brahma, the creator of the universe. Brahma embodies the primacy of organic life symbolised by this lotus. At the end of each aeon, Vishnu, the preserver and maintainer of the universe and cosmic order, spreads everywhere be-

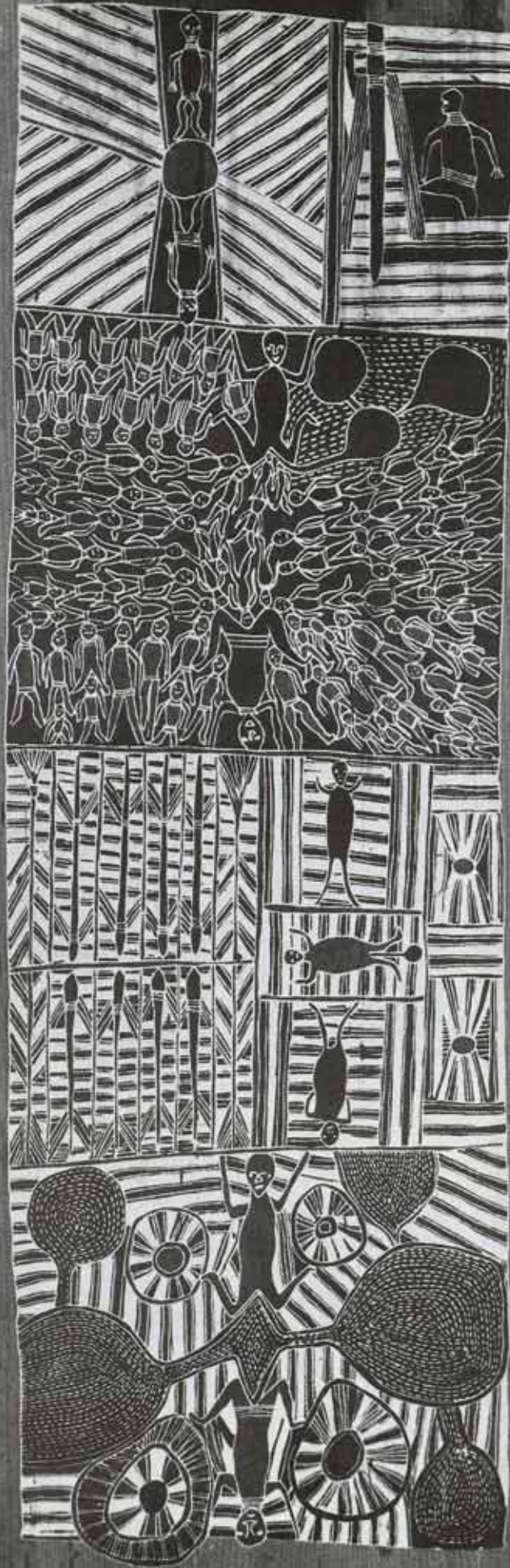
tween the destruction of one world and the creation of the next as the great Cosmic Ocean of creation. In this role he assumes the position of *narayana* (moving in the waters). The Hindu myth of creation from the waters visualises him in human form. He is depicted in art and iconography sleeping on the coiled serpent *Shesha* or *Ananta* and floating on the waters. After each cosmic deluge, Vishnu resumes this posture.



Vishnu floating on the cosmic waters of creation.
Madhubani Painting (unfinished), on site.

The truth of the unity of all existence is expressed through the mystic confirmation of the relation between the various elements of nature: the earth and sky are a divine couple; fire and whirlwind are brothers, just as water and mist, but water and fire are enemies, and so on.

In most cosmogonic myths there is a constant interplay of all the elements as forces of nature. Water is the first principle of the cosmic order, and therefore all other elements, earth, sky, wind and fire—dissolve into water, making a final reconciliation with the elemental powers.



In the beginning there was nothing except water, and the land came out of the water. It was very dark: there was no sun and from the land came a man called Bani. It was so dark he made the sun, he made it on the ground and called it Daligi. He got some cane and made a circle, and tied the cane onto the sun and lifted it, as he did he started singing. After that he stood up and stretched his back, but the sun was not very high; it was just above the heads of the people. They could not walk and were crawling on their bellies. One day there was a big flood and those crawling about drowned. The sun was lifted higher where it is now. The night came and it was dark: Daligi called his sister Genasi to follow him and become the evening star. But Genasi followed the moon and it was dark. Daligi called his brother Suli to follow him and become the morning star. On the water are the red and white water-lilies; they are the reflections of the evening and morning stars, Genasi and Suli. Soon after people came, they were taller and we came from them. They came from the land called Sailonai, in a big canoe. The red people and the white people. They found the mouth of Pedeya Creek and paddled to the north. All things belonging to the water and all things belonging to the ground were given names.

As told by Saliki of Balimo village,
Papua New Guinea.

Creation Story of Djankawn, Australian aboriginal bark painting. Replica.



1. In the beginning, at all times, above the earth, in this place,



2. Upon the earth there was a huge mist, and there was the Great Manito.



3. In the beginning, for ever, lost in space, was the Great Manito.



4. He made the huge earth and the sky.



5. He made the sun, the moon and the stars.



6. He made everything move in harmony.



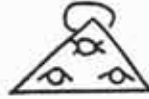
7. Then the wind blew violently, it became lighter, and water flowed strongly and from afar.



8. And groups of islands emerged and remained.



9. Once again, the Great Manito spoke, one Manito to other Manitos.



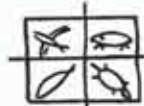
10. To mortal creatures, spirits and all.



11. And thereafter he was the Manito of men and their grandfather.



12. He sent the first mother, the mother of all creatures.



13. He sent fish, he sent turtle, he sent wild beasts, he sent birds.



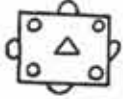
14. But a spiteful Manito made only spiteful creatures, monsters.



15. He made flies, he made mosquitoes.



22. And with him brought unhappiness, quarrelling and misfortune.



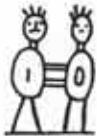
16. All creatures were friendly with one another at that time.



23. Brought bad weather, brought sickness, brought death.



17. Truly the Manitos were very active and considerate.



18. To these first men of all and to these first mothers of all: they found them helpmeets.



24. All this happened once upon a time on earth before the great flood, in the beginning.



19. And they gave them to eat when they needed to.



20. All possessed joyful wisdom, all had time to spare and happiness.



21. But in great secrecy a spiteful creature, a powerful magician, appeared on earth.

Drawings depicting the story of creation from the Walam Olum, or Red Book, of the Delaware Indian, U.S.A.

ELEMENTS IN SACRED RITUAL

In all ancient cultures, the five elements formed the basic ingredient of sacred performance and rituals. Life was celebrated through the sacralization of elements in life cycle rituals: birth, growth and death— through which the drama of life was enacted.

Ritual was a way of life for traditional man. With the constant evocation of the primordial elements fire, water and earth, traditional man accepted his dependence on them. It was a reverence born of a deep understanding of the irrevocable inter-relationship of man and nature. The sprinkling of water, invocation to the earth, offerings to the sacrificial fire, oblations to the sun, and numerous other gestures embody the spirit of unity of man and the cosmos. At all crucial times of the life cycle birth, marriage and death the pervasiveness of the elements is reiterated.

The underlying principle of all rituals is one of reverence to the elements that are regarded as the foundation of creation and earthly life as we know it. Water and fire are commonly used in conjunction with most of the rites of passage. The cleansing power is vested in water and the power to purify is attributed to fire.

Water in ritual

In initiation rituals, water confers a 'new birth'. In magic rituals it heals and in funeral rites it ensures rebirth after death. Thus its intrinsic function is germinative. Immersion in water symbolizes a total regeneration or rebirth. The emergence from the waters confers new birth of the individual. It is a repetition of the act of creation. In most Indian rituals idols of gods are immersed in



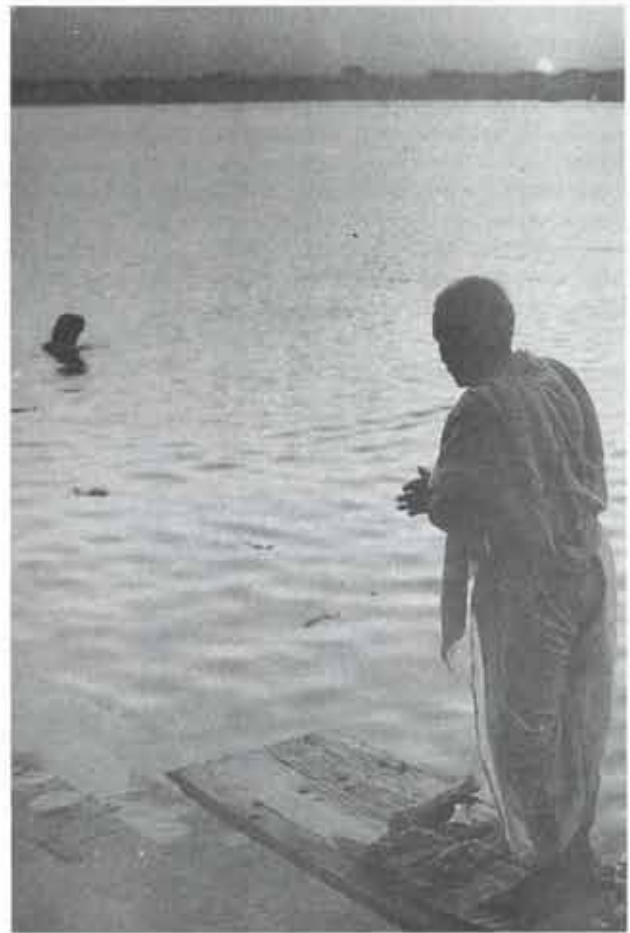
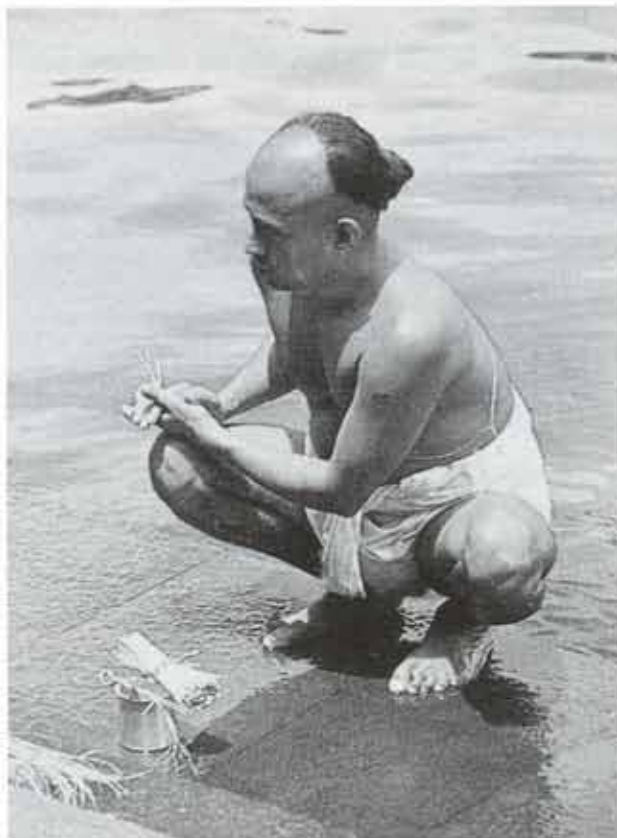
Water Chalice. Brass. Bengal.



Shalagram stand for ritual washing. Brass. Kerala.

the rivers, symbolising a return to the primal substance/element, i.e., water. Baptism in Christianity, for instance, is the chief symbol of spiritual rebirth and purification.

The more evident physical property of cleansing by water is endowed with a spiritual connotation. With ritual bath, the ancients emphasised a spiritual cleansing of the soul along with the actual washing of the body. Muslims perform ablution *wuzu* before saying the Namaz at the mosque tank/well. The Christian sprinkling holy water on himself before entering the church is a variation of the same custom. Ancient Chinese bathed their dead before burial. Ritual bath of the corpse in the Vedic tradition of India precedes its cremation. During the ceremony of Hydrophoria, water was poured into crevasses for the dead, as the Greeks believed that at the time just before the spring rains, the dead were thirsty. Thus libations for the dead were merely a form of liberation from 'suffering' in the after life.



The purifying bath has been accorded a central place in the theology of God's salvific purpose and of man's attempt to understand his existence and to reach liberation.

"May the waters purify the Earth, may this Earth, purified, purify me! May the Lord of the Holy word purify me; may Earth, purified by Brahman purify me."

Mahanarayana Upanishad, 317-18

Everyone who drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst: the water that I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to the eternal life.

John: Chapter 4, New Testament, Holy Bible

In the Indian birth ritual, near the child's navel or right ear the father says softly.

The ocean is full of life; through the rivers it is full of life. By this vital power I make you full of life.

Paraskara-grihya-sutra 1.1.16.6



Summoning the Holy Waters



Baptism bowl. Recreated.

*O Ganga, O Yamuna, O Godavari, O Saraswati,
O Narmada, O Sindhu, O Kaveri, enter this water.
"O God, O Sun, since all Holy Waters are touched
by your rays, bestow on me this holy water."*

Arghya mantra.

Fire in ritual

As one of the four cosmic elements, fire is symbolised by light, lightning and gold, and in its material characteristics, heat and dryness.

Fire being the prime agent of purification and renewal was concerned with sacrifice and resurrection. It has been used throughout history in sacrificial rituals wherein the burnt offering was considered an atonement for sin.

Fire was a mediator between man and heaven or the gods in the elaborate Hindu *Agnicayana* and *Agnibotra* rites. Fire, a symbol of purity and prosperity, is the most sacred and important emblem of the Parsis (followers of Zoroastrianism). It is the signature of Ahura Mazda. Parsi fire rituals bear a distinct resemblance to the Vedic ones.

The sun is the heavenly form of fire and daily oblations to it are common in the civilizations of the world. The sun-people, as the Aztec Indians of South America are commonly titled, based their entire religion on the Sun God. Gold, often associated with sun, used in Vedic rituals as a purifier and symbol of power, prosperity and lustre, conferred these qualities on the individual performing the ritual.



Afarghan. Fire Censer. Parsi.

The cult of the hearth fire was common to the Indo-Iranians and probably to the Indo-Europeans, i.e., it goes back to prehistory. Traditionally, Zoroastrians have maintained ever-burning hearth-fires. For Iranians, fire was linked

with justice and hence with *asha*, and Zarathustra enjoined praying in its presence.

Worthy of worship are you, worthy of prayer! Worthy of worship may you be, worthy of prayer in the dwellings of men!... Fire gives command to all for whom he cooks the evening and the morning meal. From all solicits a good offering, and a wished-for offering, and a devotional offering... May you live joyfully all the nights which you may live! This is the blessing of Fire on one who brings him fuel, dry, sought out to burn brightly.



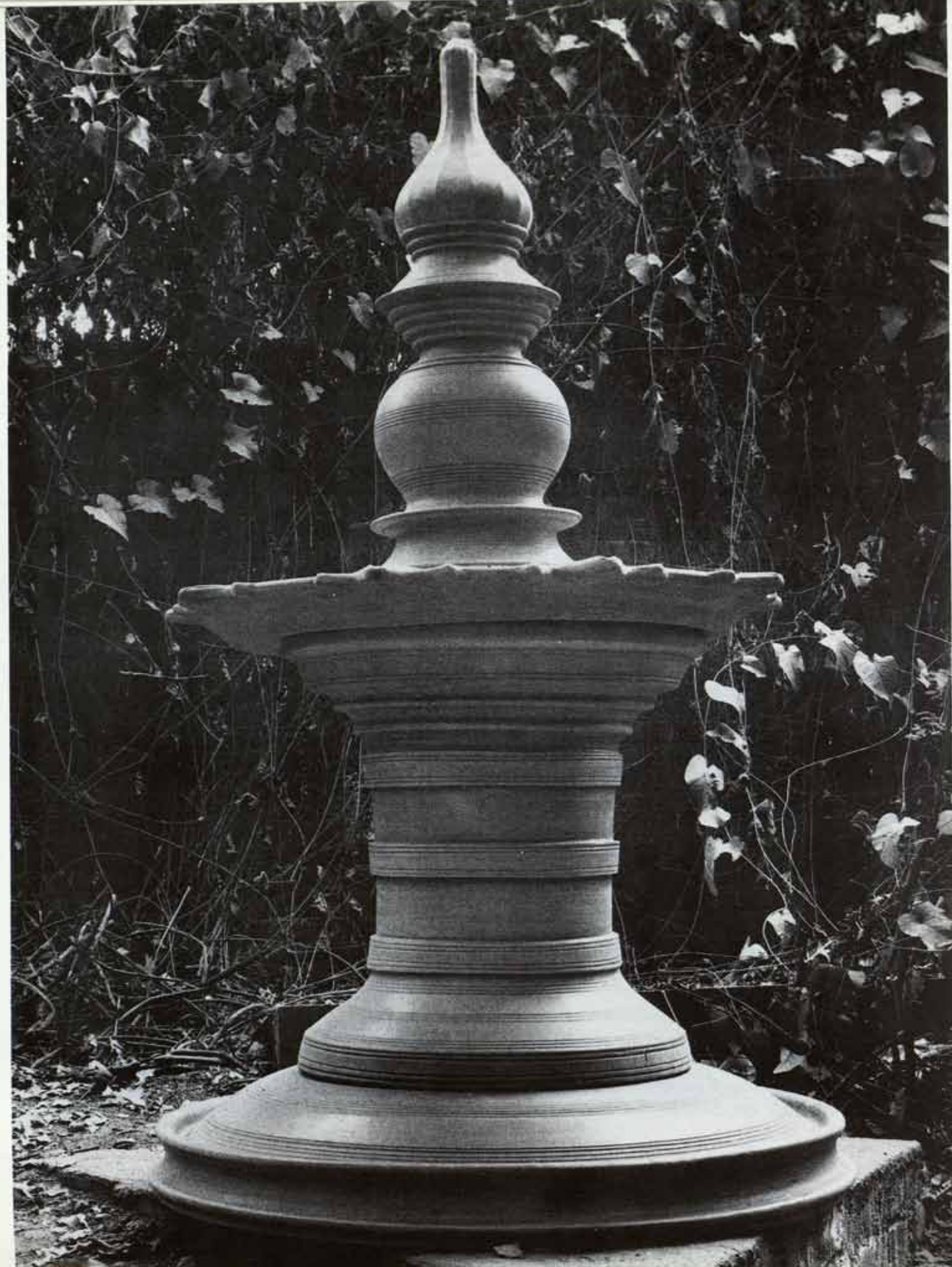
Phoenix emerging from fire, a symbol of rejuvenation.

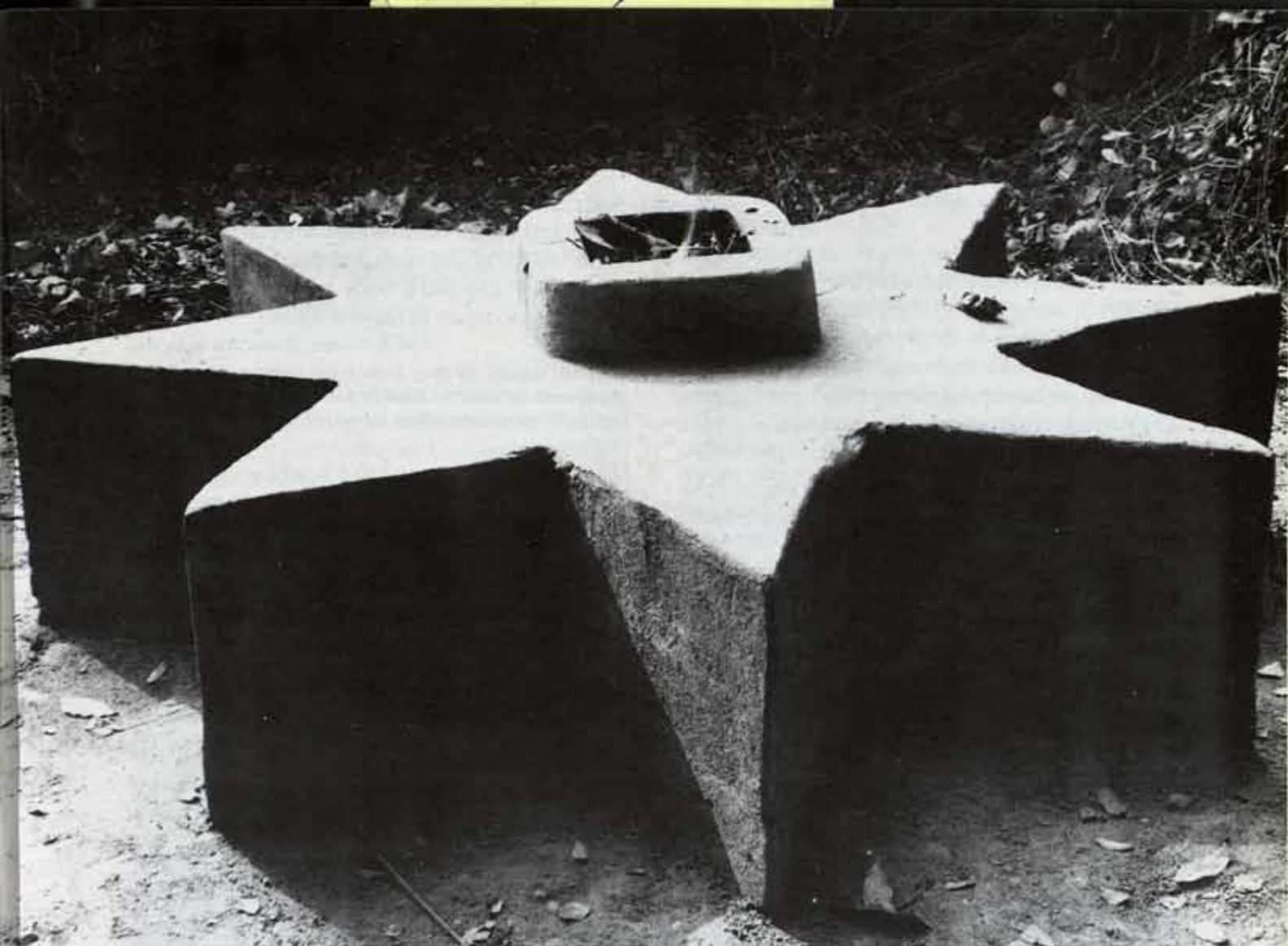
Fires known in different places as bale fire, wild fire, will fire or neat fire were ignited to signalise the passage of the seasons, for purposes of purification and to symbolically revive the powers of a declining sun. They were lit in celebration of heralding the seasons — spring, summer, winter. The Guy Fawkes bonfire is said to be a remnant of an ancient fire festival. The symbolic victory of good over evil finds its end in the bonfire. Holi, the festival of colour celebrated in northern India, begins with the lighting of a bonfire which symbolises the purity of the legendary prince boy who remained untouched by the flames.

Cremation practised by the Hindus as the form of disposal of the dead body signifies purification of the dead by fire and the final destruction of the gross body.

May now the breath be one with the wind, be one with the immortal and may this body end in ashes...

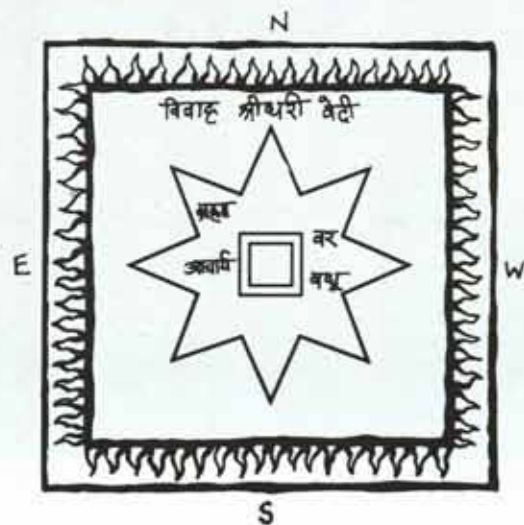
Brihadaranyaka Upanisad 5.15.1





Altar of the Nuptial Fire. Recreated from *Vivaha Paddhati*.

Agni or Fire is the main deity who stands witness to the wedding ceremony. Fire circumambulation forms the most important aspect of this ceremony. The bride is led around the nuptial fire seven times in a clockwise direction. Thus the bride and groom take seven steps, *sapta-padi*, before the fire, each step representing a particular blessing: food, strength, wealth, happiness, progeny, cattle and devotion. Finally, the forehead of the bride is marked and water is sprinkled on the couple.



(Opposite page)

Ritual Lamp. Terracotta. Contemporary.

Earth in ritual

The earth shall not be defiled.

Avesta Zend

The worship of the Earth mother was in itself a religion of antiquity and remains as much among all the civilisations of the world. She is the benign mother who gives birth to man, feeds and nurtures him to life, and to whose womb he returns in death. The earth, as ruler of the dead and mother of the living, was divinized in early times in the form of a goddess and linked with fertility rites. The maternal aspect of the earth stems from its intrinsic and infinite fruitfulness. It bears the mountains, the trees, the rivers, the animals and all life in its womb.

Putting a new born baby on the bare earth or taking a mud bath are two of the symbolic ways of exploiting the fertility of the earth. The Hindus bury their infants while they cremate the adults. This is in the hope of rebirth in the cradle of the Earth Mother.

The fecundity of Mother Earth translates itself into agricultural rituals at harvest and sowing the world over. The agricultural cycle is reinforced by similarities in the rituals at the beginning and at the

end of sowing. The Santhals and the Oraon tribes of India invoked the Earth Mother at their harvest festivals. The Earth Mother governs the fate of the seeds and that of the dead in the same way. Black is the colour of the earth and the dead. When the Bambaras have laid a body in the grave and are preparing to cover it, they beseech:

***May the winds, as they blow from north or south
from east or west be kind to us! Give us rain.
Let us have an abundant harvest!***

*According to the Quran (20.55), while covering the pit with earth, start from the side of the head. Gather soft clay in both the hands and throw it on the grave three times. For the first time while throwing soil say:

65. Minha Khalq-na-kum (*We created you from this very earth*)

While throwing the earth the second time say:

66. Wa fiha n'ueedu kum (*And we are returning you to the same*),

And when throwing the same for the third time say:

67. Wa minha nokh-riju-kum taratan ukhra
(*And we shall raise you again from this very earth*)



Grave. On site, Recreated.

The Christian burial service in much the same vein says:

***From dust you are
And to dust you shall return.***

Genesis Ch.12

The Hindus at cremation say:

Crawl to the earth, your mother.

Rig Veda 10.18.10

Thus death and rebirth are interwoven in ritual and become merely separate moments in the human cycle. Fertility cults and cults of the dead intersect at a number of vital points so that it is not surprising that their fusion should be succeeded by a new religious synthesis based on a fuller understanding of the significance of man's existence in the universe.

Santhal funeral chant on the pyre

***"O dead body do not dally now, Go like the wind.
Burn like a flame. We have given you wood and
fire. Be consumed and go!"***

***For those who have given up their bodies after
purifying themselves at prayaga by bathing at the
confluence of these two rivers Ganga and Jamuna
the two rivers of the ocean there is no bondage
of another body in a future birth and this
liberation is achieved alike by the wise and the
ignorant.***

Kalidas



Cremation of the body by the river side.

THE STORY OF THE POT

In creating each new pot a potter comes into contact with the five elements: earth, water, wind, fire and space— Prakriti. Like human life, the pot also has its own symbolic journey. Primal communities use a variety of pots in their life cycle rituals. During ceremonies it assumes the form of a god or a goddess. It plays an important part in birth rituals and in death rites and in daily life it fulfills a variety of secular functions.

The pot holds the universe

Bengali proverb

A myth among the tribals of Gujarat describes the birth of the pot, *kumbha*, and the potters community.

In the Golden Age when the gods intermingled freely, Shiva required an earthen pot to tie the marital knot with Parvati, the daughter of the



Wall painting on the origin of the pot by tribal artists from Gujarat. On site.

mighty Himalaya. A Brahmin by the name of Kulalak was the only one who could render this service. For this work, he demanded that tools be given to him. Thus, from Vishnu's *sudarshan chakra* came the potter's wheel, which was pivoted on the Mahadev's hillock. Shiva gave his pestle, *ghotana*, to turn the wheel, his lion cloth, *langota*, to use as a mop, his water jar, *kamandulu*, for water and his sacred thread, *janoi*, to detach the finished pot from the wheel. Brahma gave the primeval tortoise, *adi-kurma*, for scraping the vessel. With these tools, Kulalak prepared pots which were given to Shiva who was able to perform his wedding ceremony. From then onwards, descendents of Kulalak are called *kumbhars* (makers of earthen pots). The murals in vivid colours depict this story.

The creation of man is also linked with the potter and clay. Brahma, the creator, made a clay model of man into which he infused life. This is the reason why, in some parts of India, a potter is called *prajapati* (creator of man).

Pot Depicting Woman

In the life cycle, the pot is a participant at all stages. It represents, at birth, the womb, *garbha*. It is an auspicious witness at weddings. At death, it contains the ashes of the dead and the wishes of the ancestors that must bless the soul of the dead person. Women and earth are closely related, earth and clay are one, hence the pot is imbued with the spirit of the woman. Therefore, in most civilizations, pottery-making has been the forte of women.

The anthropomorphous jar excavated at Rolia in Turkey (2100 BC), which has eyes and nose on the rim, breasts and belly, forming the body and raised arms emanating from the sides, vividly expresses this unique relationship between women and pot. In a later era, during the reign of Gordianus III in the Roman Empire, Phoenician currency shows a design depicting in the centre a large jar with ears of wheat growing from the shoulders, with a Sphinx in attendance on either side. Since Sphinx are the attendants of the Earth Goddess she is obviously represented by the large jar in the

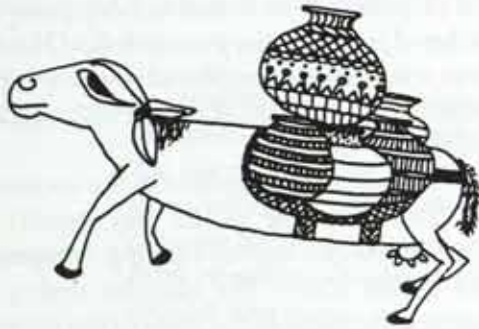
centre. The Manipuri goddess Panthoibi is the goddess of potters who is said to have passed the knowledge of pottery to the women folk of Manipur. In Cyprus, a jar called *Kernophoria* was worshipped as a goddess. This equation of the pot with a goddess is found all over the world.

All the elements fuse together in the creation of the pot. The kneading of the clay (earth), the 'throwing' of the pot and its shaping requires the constant use of water. The ultimate drying and firing in the kiln brings in the roles of the elements of fire and air in making pots.

The sun is very much part of the potter's life. They are companions. In fact, the word Prajapati, 'Lord of the People', is used for both the sun and the potter. Both are creators. Day and night and in all the seasons the potter has to watch for the sun and use the inter-play of light and shade in creating the pots. He knows, just by touch, exactly how much heat, moisture and elasticity is in the pots and figurines which he makes. Then, only when it is rightly sunbaked does he put them in the kiln. He has to know the nights too. Just by hearing the whistling of the wind, he knows he must take care of his objects. In this way the potter intimately knows the *Prabar*, parts of the day and night, with his inner sense. At night the potter goes to bed early after singing devotional songs about God and clay.



Pot-shaped goddess. Toria, Trukey. 2100 BC. Replica.

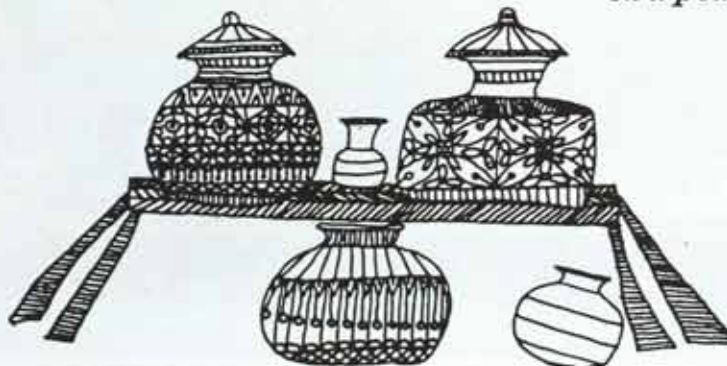


*Oh! the pot is everywhere!
Where there is buttermilk, in the cupboard,
a pot
Where water is stored, at the waterstand,
a pot
Where food is kept, on the stove, a pot
Where there is jaggery, in the attic, a pot*



*In the heart of the home,
as 'gotraj', ancestors, a pot
Vastu, During house warming,
at the threshold of each home, a pot
where a marriage 'pandal' is built, a pot
when the 'garba' dance takes place,
in the courtyard, a pot*

*During sickness,
left in the outskirts of the village, a pot
At every stop in a pilgrimage, a pot
In death, at the cremation ground, a pot
At a 'yagna' representing the planets, are
pots
In the village square, the singer plays a beat,
on a pot.*





Pot shaped goddess. Clay. Rajasthan.



Vastu-bhu Puja (House-warming worship)

Near the water stand in a house, a pot with water and coconut is placed on the 'wheat' layer. A lamp is lit, and on four sides on the floor around the pot red marks are made when the lamp is lit it is believed that life has entered the house.



A range of pots and clay utensils that are replaced at the birth of a child.

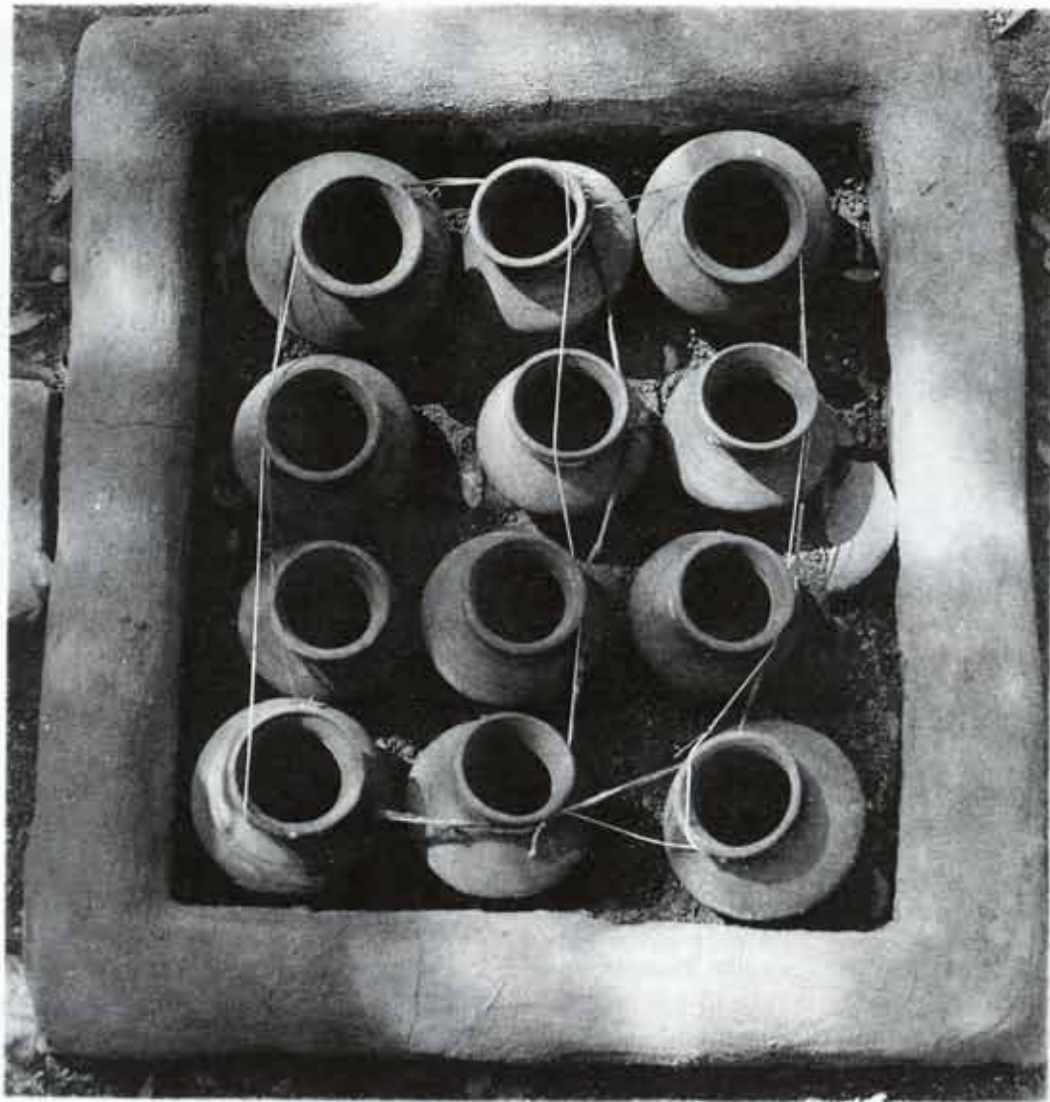
*May Earth the Goddess, she who bears her treasure stored up in many a place, gold, gems and riches,
Giver of opulence, grant possessions to us bestowing them with love and favour.*



The potters clay forms a vessel it is the space within that serves.

Lao Tse





Pots used in death ritual. Tribal. Gujarat. Replica.

(Opposite page)

Ganga *ghata*, a symbol of abundance, life and fertility of soil.

Sarcophagus, the urn that contained the dead in the ancient Nilgiri burial mounds. Similarly Chandbri tribals even today create pots like domes and install them for the Spirits of the dead to reside.

Palanicappan.

***Spring up, become fair, be distended, O barley,
with your own increase!
Burst all vessels designed to contain you!
In response, divine barley, to our invocation,
rise up there tall as the sky, inexhaustible
as the boundless sea!***

Atharva Veda 6.142.1-2

ARCHITECTURE

With the creation of sacred space, man evoked the elements as a metaphor in sacred precincts, temples and habitats. The elements shaped the environment in as much as they provided a symbolic scheme within which sacred architecture could be articulated.

Primal man's first contact with the elements consisted of the act of the creation of space. Space, so constructed, however simple, like a circle drawn on the surface of the earth, was imbued with power and sacredness. When a primal community moved away from a settlement, it erected a ring of stones around it. Within this ring of stones, were said to dwell the ancestors of the tribe, in one form or another. Should the tribe return to the ring, it became easy to communicate with them. The hardness, ruggedness, and permanence of matter was in itself a heirophany in the religious consciousness of the ancients. And nothing was more direct and autonomous in the completeness of its strength, nothing more noble or more awe-inspiring, than a majestic rock, or a boldly standing block of granite.

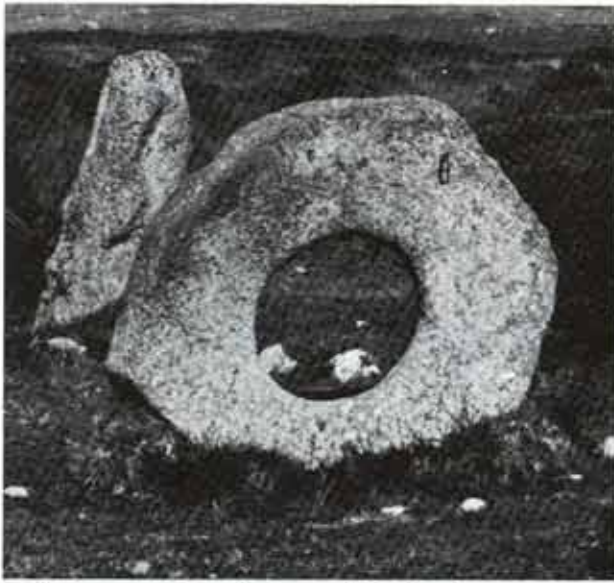
The stone is never looked upon as a dead entity, but as a spirit that animates it, or a sacred symbol. Stones, rocks, monoliths, cromlechs, menhirs, etc. become sacred because they bear the mark of some spiritual force.

In Islam, a medieval tradition describes the Black Stone imbedded in the *Kabab* as God's right hand, which he extends to his servants (who kiss it), as a man shakes hands with his neighbours.

Stones at sacred sites are imbued with powers of healing as well. Due to their establishment at a sacred, and therefore pure, place, they are motivators and expeditors of a movement towards the pure-and-the-perfect. Their essential perfection enables them to become a conduit for the reduction of impurity.

The hardness and permanence of stone as well as its ability to serve as both tool and weapon, led to the equation of stone with power and authority. Standing stones became phallic symbols, fertility and the ability to make fertile being interpreted as the most basic of human powers. These are found in all ancient civilisations. Holed stones were widely believed to possess healing powers which stemmed from their position at the entrance of burial chambers—a symbol of birth, passage of initiation and rebirth.

Water was another element of great significance for the growth of civilisation as it led to the formation of various structures around it. The gushing holy rivers and springs were the main sites prescribed for building of temples in India. The sparkling fountains of the Seven Springs at Bisley, Gloucestershire, have never failed even in times of long droughts.



Crick stone near Morvah, Cornwall, England. Holed stones widely believed to possess healing powers. The tribes of central Australia have similar notions. Spencer and Gillen instance the case of a huge rock known as Erathipa which has an opening in one side from which the souls of the children imprisoned in it watch for a woman to pass by so that they may be born again. The childless women of the Maidu tribe of Northern California touch a rock shaped like a pregnant woman. On the island of Kai (south-west of New Guinea), a woman who wants to have a child smears a stone with grease. The same custom is found in Madagascar.



Avebury, near Stonehenge, Wiltshire, England, Prehistoric site. (Reconstruction drawing)



The great pre-Celtic Cornish burial chambers consist of a number of vertical granite slabs surmounted by a quoit or giant capstone, and originally covered with a mound of earth and stone: a symbol of the mystery of death and rebirth, and a dream place of past and present where psychic and physical realities merge.

The burial stone became the means of protecting life against death. The soul "dwelt" in the stones as, in other cultures, it dwelt in the tomb- looked upon, as a "dead man's house". "Imprisoned" in a stone, the soul would be forced only to act beneficently assisting fertilization. That is why, in so many cultures, stones thought to be inhabited by "ancestors", are instruments for fertilizing fields and women.



Megalithic monument. Kerala.

Metaphorical Constructions in Architecture

Out of simple ring of stones where man could communicate with the divine, developed open-air burial chambers. The single gravestone imbued with the spirit of the ancestor, and the circle of stones wherein ancestors lived, grew into great megalithic monuments.

These metaphoric constructions in architecture were in the open air. The symbol of sacred space and the sacred centre was thus articulated in these pre-building forms of architectural construction. A demarcated space naturally presupposed the centre, the navel, the axial, and, consequently, the perpendicular, linking the earth to the sky.

In every symbolic context the tree is central and axial. The tree is the symbol of the complete cosmos, its branches are the heavens, the lower branches or the surface of the ground where it grows are the planes of the earth; the roots, plunging into the subterranean levels, are the hells; and the trunk is the world axis that centres and supports these multiple worlds.

The tree, symbolic of the umbilical cord linking earth and sky, was interpreted in architecture as the pillar, whether physically present or imagined.

In India, the pillar of the dawn or the column of the sun is evoked in a hymn of the *Atharva Veda* (10.7):

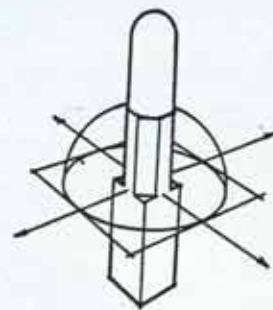
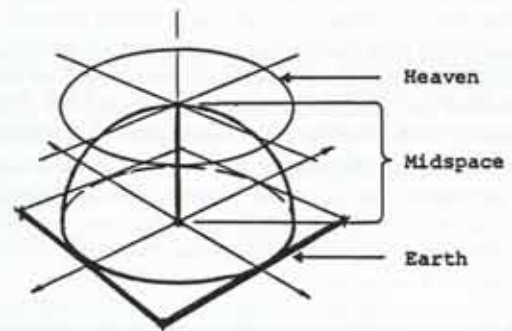
skambha bears these three worlds, the earth and the sky, skambha bears the wide midspace, skambha bears the six vast regions and has pervaded this entire universe.

The symbolism of the *skambha* is interpreted in terms of the physical universe. The sun is homologous to other symbols of the centre. It is the *axis mundi*, since centre and radius of the world in view of the sun's eye are coincident. Thus the sun is itself the pillar that holds apart the world.

Architecturally, the stupa demonstrates these metaphysical notions. The centre of the stupa plan is identified with the sun, the centre of the cosmos, located at the navel of the universe at the summit of the World Mountain. The stupa is particularly suited for the purpose of illustrating this fact since it carries the main symbolic context of Indian



The tree is the perpendicular that centres the cosmos. World Tree and World Axis are co-incident. The tree figures the total cosmos: its branches are the heavens; the lower branches or the surface of the ground whence it grows as are the plane of the earth; the roots, plunging into the sub-terrestrial levels, are the hells; and the trunk is the world axis that centres and supports these multiple worlds. It subsumes the elements composing the universe: "Its branches are ether, air, fire, water and earth."



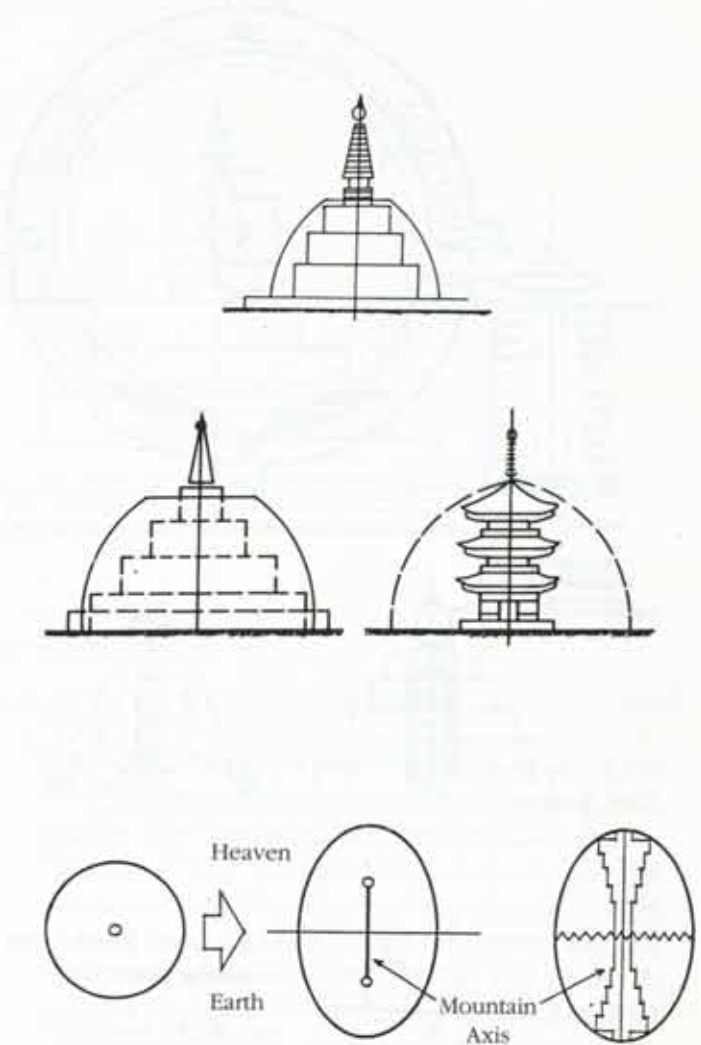
The axial pillar props apart heaven and earth to open up midspace.

The Pillar of the Dawn or Column of the Sun that figures in the same cosmogenetic symbolism of the diremption of heaven and earth. The *Skambha* is the "Great Being in the midst of the world", "to whom all the gods are joined as the branches around the trunk of the tree".



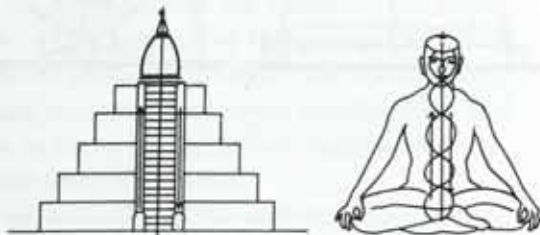
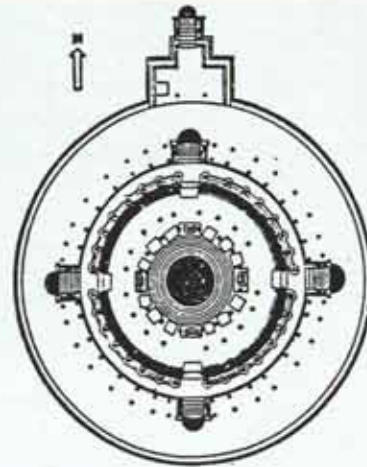
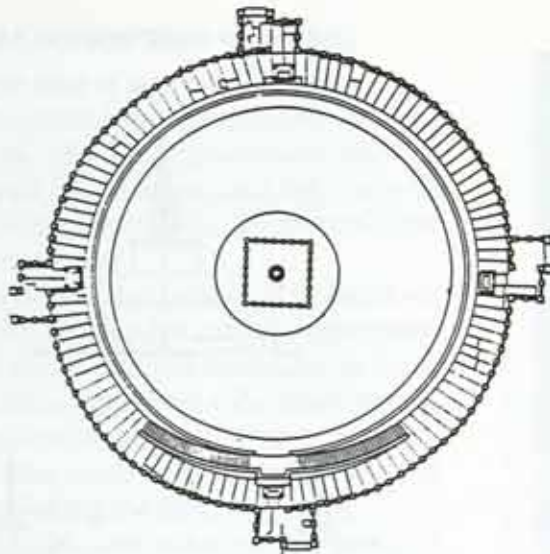
buildings: a defined centre, an axis, orientation, a precise and succinct geometry, and the use of symbolic forms, such as the square and the circle, the cube and the sphere. In terms of architectural function, it is an extreme case: has no usable interior space, and its construction is of basic simplicity, obviating explanations of its forms as resulting from functional or structural necessity. On the contrary it exists solely to satisfy the needs of symbolism and has a clear and unambiguous metaphysical reference.

The egg of the dome-stupa conceals a mountain. The paradigmatic model for this symbolic construct is found in the *Vishnu-Purana* in which the world egg, floating like a bubble on the primeval waters, is said to contain Mt *Meru*, "Like it's ammion". The symbolism of the central axis is retained in Hindu temple architecture.



The Mountain in the World Egg.

The egg of the dome-stupa conceals a mountain. In terms of cosmological symbolism and insofar as it is the container of the world, the cosmic egg cannot exist unless its halves are held apart by the mountain axis. In turn, the presence of the mountain axis necessarily presupposes the existence of the world egg. The cosmogenesis is a separation of the two halves of the world egg by the mountain axis. The two halves of the cosmic egg are heaven and earth, the complementary and principal poles of the universe. These halves, heaven and earth, are propped apart by the world axis. Expressing this symbolism geometrically, the ovoid has two foci, which lie on its axis. These foci represent the bifurcation of a point-centre; the axis that joins them is also that which separates them.



The stupa has many and various forms. The difference between domed, towered and pyramidal stupas are sufficiently marked to suggest that they are the unrelated products of isolated architectural traditions. Each and every form of the stupa is centered by a vertical axis. The axis is its fundamental and indispensable element. In the context of symbolic significance the axis is the stupa; the stupa exists to emphasize the presence of a perpendicular; it is the celebration of a vertical. The stupa's other components are the many developments, embellishments and adornments of the meanings contained within the axis.



Space - Blue - Jewel - form
Amitabha (West)

Air - Black - Semi-circle
Divyadundubhimegha
Nirghosa (North)

Fire - Red - Triangle
Ratnaketu (East)

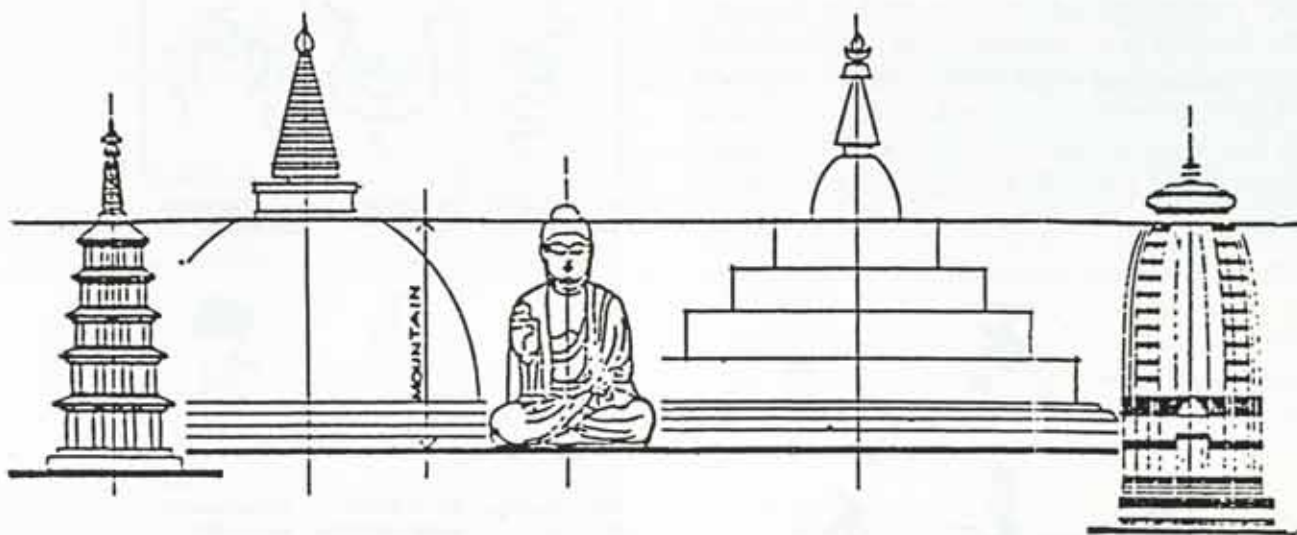
Water - White - Circle
Mahavairocana (Centre)

Earth - Yellow - Square
Samkusamitaraja (South)



The stupa of the five elements (Japanese gorinto) showing the correlations of the five elements with the five shapes, the five colours and the five Buddhas of the matrix world. The stupa of the five elements inscribed with seed syllables. On the front of the stupa are written *la*, *va*, *ra*, *ba* and *kha*, which are the seed syllables of the five elements earth, water, fire, air and space, and also those of the five

Buddhas of the matrix world. On the back of the stupa is written the single syllable *vam*, which is the seed of the sixth element, consciousness, and also of Mahavairocana in the diamond world. The stupa thus indicates the non-duality of physical phenomena and mind and of the matrix and diamond realms.



Homologies of the Buddha, the temple and the stupa.

In the stupa, therefore, the operation of symbolism as a determinant of architectural form can be viewed in sharp focus; in the stupa we can see, in their uncomplicated simplicity, symbolic patterns that are equally applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to the layout of other building forms, from cities and towns, to palaces, houses and temples.

Dynamics of Elemental symbolism in Architecture

Apart from orientation to the *axis mundi*, power centres, and alignments to the sun, ancient cultures such as the Chinese, Japanese and Indian also took into account the environment and the elements, and the built fabric.

Feng shui, a term literally translated as 'wind-water' is the Chinese art of geomancy, the placement and location of man-made structures, to harmonise with, as well as benefit from, the surrounding physical environment. For centuries, *feng shui* has been widely practiced amongst the Chinese to reassure and benefit the living, although it was originally used to locate propitious sites for the burial of the dead. Good *feng shui* architec-

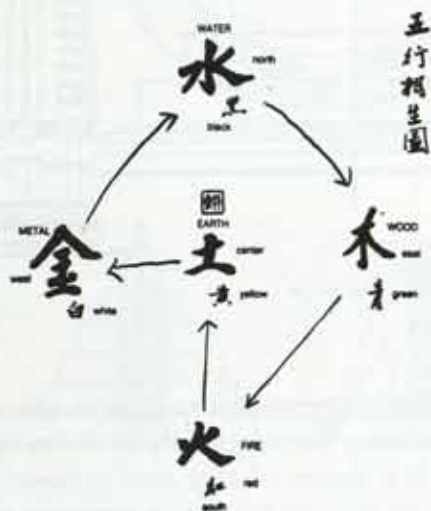
tural design is expressed not just in space, form and structure, but essentially in harmony with nature. The theory of *feng shui* is based on the balance of the *yin* and *yang* elements and the harmony of the five elements. The Chinese believe that all things can be classified under the five elements: gold, wood, water, fire and earth. To achieve harmony, the elements of all things must be



The *yin* and *yang* forms

The theory of *Feng shui* is based on the unity of the *yin* and *yang* elements. The *yin* quality is represented by all things feminine, negative and passive: cool colours, darkness, night, moon, shadow, soft materials and a static disposition. *Yang* is represented by masculine, positive and active qualities: warm colours, brightness, day, sun, light, hard materials.

compatibly related in a manner that is complementary to one another. *Feng shui* has considered, the "art of adapting the residences of the living and the dead so as to cooperate and harmonise with the local currents of the cosmic breath". The force of *qi* (breath or energy) is fundamental to *feng shui*. In *feng shui*, the aim is to locate nourishing *qi* and channelise it towards creating a harmonious balance.

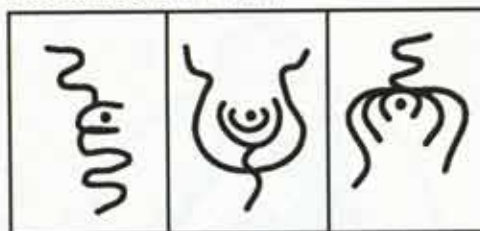


Five Elements Creative cycle

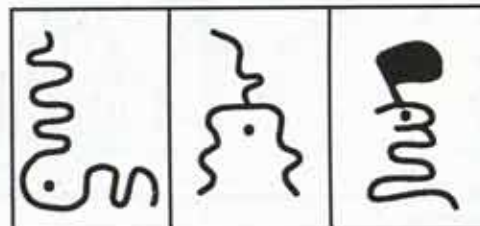


Five Elements Destructive cycle

Favourable Situations

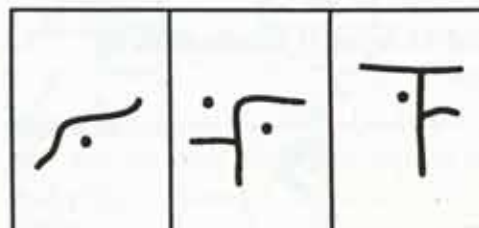
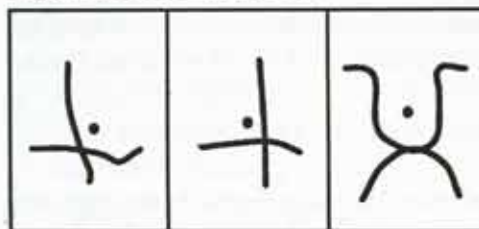


Site of posterity, wealth & fame Site of good fortune Site of posterity and wealth



Site of posterity, fame and fortune Site of wealth and prosperous well-being Site of posterity and wealth

Unfavourable Situations

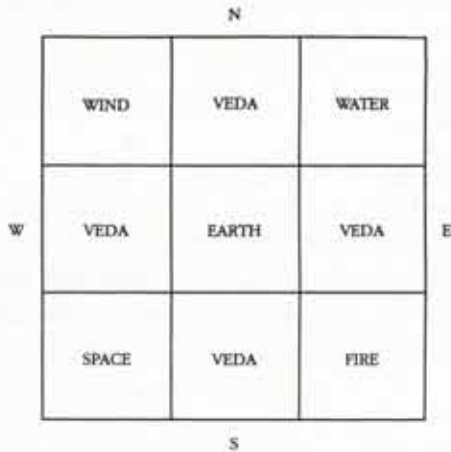


The diagrams are derived from the Water Dragon Classic. The dot represents the house while the lines represent the water courses.

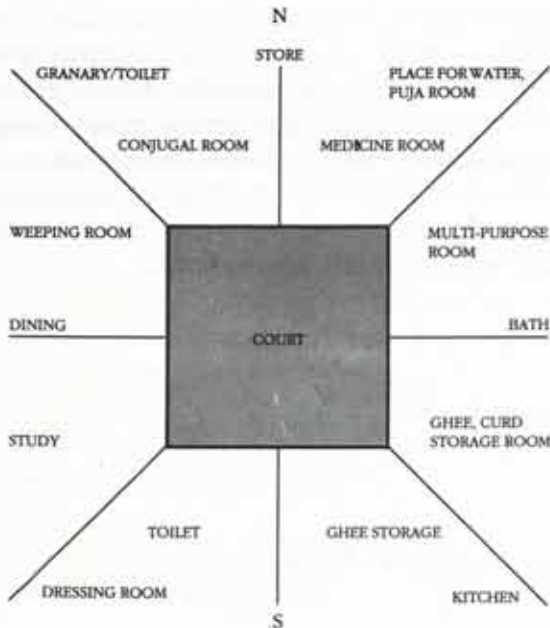
Site with the White Tiger and Azure Dragon - the ideal *Feng Shui*. The houses are sited on a 'horse shoe' fertile soil bounded by the 'Azure Dragon' of *yang* mountainous range on the left, the 'White Tiger' of the *yin* hilly site on the right and lofty mountain at the back (north). On the south a calm meandering stream flows by. It is believed that the blessings are transmitted from north to south as good cosmic breath comes down the slope this way. The mountain in the north protects the site from evil influences.

Vastupurusha Mandala

In India the elemental symbolism was absorbed in the *Vastupurusha Mandala*, the most potent architectural mechanism that embodied cosmic affinities. It was essentially a geometric computation of grid of squares. A square orientated to the four cardinal directions, provided the blue print for building. It governed the rhythm, orientation and structural synthesis of a building.



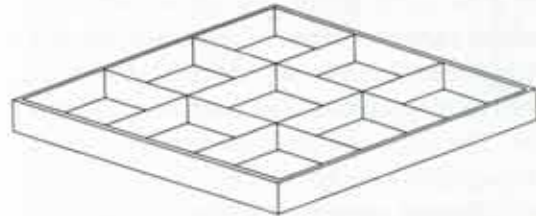
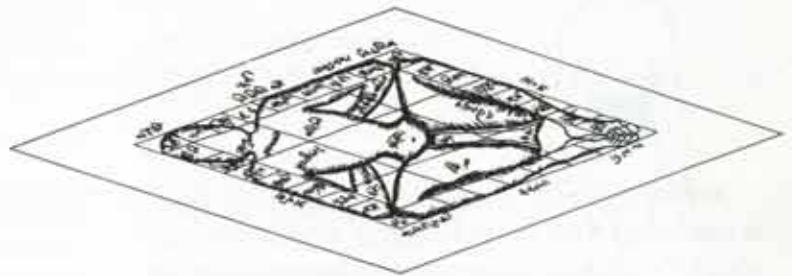
Pitba Mandala. Mayamata 7.24.



Direction diagram after *Vasturatnakara*.

The *mandala* or grid is depicted as the *Purusba* or Cosmic man. The universe of the Hindus is portrayed as a colossal *Purusba* whose macrocosmic body contains the world. The square frame of the *mandala* is further subdivided. Each of the smaller squares is a *pada* or the seat of a deity.

The *Vastupurusha Mandala* in practice offered the formula of determining the functions of the building in relation to its orientation. For example, the *Vasturatnakara* assigns specific functions to each direction. The south-east is dedicated to the element fire, where a kitchen would probably be built. The north-east is dedicated to water, so the water bodies would be located here. In this manner, the formal graph lends itself to an uncomplicated design solution.



The Vastupurusha Mandala

Facing you, O House, who are facing me, I approach you peacefully; sacred Fire and Water are within, the main doors to Cosmic Order. I bring here these waters free from disease, destroyers of disease. In this House, together with Fire immortal, I take up thy abode!

Atharva Veda 9.3.22-23

HUMAN BODY

In most traditional systems of medicine, man is regarded as a miniature cosmos whose body is composed of the five elements. The association of the elements with parts and functions of the body were the foundation of the disciplines of holistic medicine like Chinese medicine, Yunani medicine, Ayurveda and Yoga.

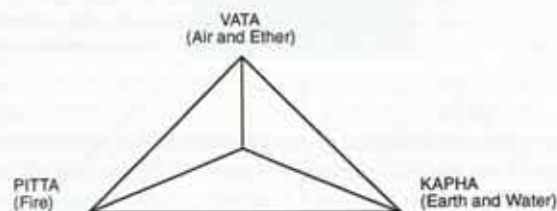
In this body, the Mount Meru (central axis) is surrounded by seven islands; there are rivers, seas, mountains, fields... The sun and moon, agents of creation and moon, agents of creation and destruction, ... ether, air, fire, water and earth are also there.

Shiva Samhita 2, 1-3

According to ancient traditions, the human body is made up of the basic elements which also constitute the nature and the universe outside. The five basic elements; earth, water, fire, air and ether are organised in a variety of forms, shapes and proportions giving rise to the diversity of the phenomenal world. The basic elements differ from one tradition to another. The cause of life, however, is considered to be cosmic energy, essence or vital force called by different names in different traditions *prana, jiva, qi*. Almost all cultures and civilisations have held the belief that the human body is the reflection of a series of more subtle bodies, which are characteristically invisible and interpenetrating forms reflecting the nature of God. In the oriental traditions it is believed that in a healthy body the basic elements are in a state of equilibrium, and the vital energy flows smoothly through channels or pathways (*nadis*, meridians, etc.) in the body which are fixed. A disturbance in the state of the five elements or a blocking of the smooth flow of the energy causes disease and illness.

Ayurvedic System

According to Ayurveda, the traditional Indian system of healing, the human body constitutes five elements — ether, air, fire, water and earth. The energy or essence giving life is called *prana* or *jiva*. The five elements give rise to three humours - *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* - which govern the physical and mental functions of the body. The characteristics of each humour are related to the fundamental elements from which they originate.



Vata is derived from ether and air. It is all-pervasive, light, dry, abundant, cold, mobile and rough. It is responsible for all body movements, mind activities, blood circulation, respiration, excretion, speech, sensation, touch, hearing, feelings of fear, anxiety, grief, enthusiasm, natural urges, formation of fetus, the sexual act and retention.

Pitta is derived from fire. It is hot, sharp, sour, pungent and has a fleshy odour. It is responsible for vision, digestion, hunger, thirst, heat regulation, softness and lustre, cheerfulness, intellect and sexual vigour.

Kapba is derived from water and earth. It is cool, soft, solid, dull, sweet, heavy, slimy, unctuous and immobile. It constitutes the solid structure of the body and gives unctuousness, binding, firmness, heaviness, sexual potency, strength, forbearance, restraint and absence of greed.

In Ayurveda, illness is not considered to be limited in space and time, and it never occurs by chance. It could be due to an accumulation period of disharmony and imbalance in an individual over a period of time which may be beyond the span of one lifetime.

Therapy in Ayurveda may be given at the rational, psychological and spiritual levels.

At the rational level treatment is by medication, manipulation of diet and local application of medicine or other treatments. At the psychological level the power of the mind is used to help in the healing process. This is done by several methods including meditation, auto-suggestion, etc. At the spiritual level healing is done by the recitation of *mantras*, wearing of roots and gems and doing auspicious actions (charity, etc.). Treatment is often done at all three levels simultaneously.

Kapha-dominating people are dull in activities, diet and speech, delayed initiation, disorderly, stable movements, well-united and strong, ligaments, little hunger, thirst and perspiration, clear eyes, face and complexion.



Pitta-dominating people are intolerant to heat, usually have hot face, delicate organs, tendency to have moles, freckles and acne, lustrous complexion, early appearance of wrinkles, falling and graying hair, body smell, intolerance and lack of endurance.



Vata-dominating people are agile, quick and unrestricted in their movements, swift in action, quick in fear, and other emotions, easily get irritated, intolerant to cold, shiver easily, have coarse hairs and nails, have prominent blood vessels.



Chinese System

The 5000 year old tradition of Chinese healing has several systems. In this system the cosmic energy called *chi* or *qi* flows along channels called meridians. An orderly way of flowing gives harmony, balance and good health. It consists of two opposite forces called the *yin* and *yang*. These forces run through the whole universe and everything that exists depends on the inter-play between them. According to the Chinese system, their different forms of combinations produce the five basic elements - fire, earth, metal, water and wood - of which everything is made. *Yang* is the positive energy and *yin* is negative. *Yang* has the qualities of the sun, light, strength, the right side, fire, dryness. The qualities associated with *yin* are just the opposite - moon, darkness, weakness, the left side, water, wetness.

Chinese give more emphasis to the emotion part and call it the 'bodymindspirit'. They believe that all diseases have an internal cause essentially involving the illness of the spirit to some degree.

Acupuncture is based on the belief that in the healthy human body there is a continuous circulation of *qi*, which basically means air or breath. It is a method by which disease is treated and pain relieved by piercing on specific points on the skin. All points are divided into twelve systems. The points belonging to any one system are connected by meridians linked with the major organs of the body including heart, lungs, liver, kidneys and bladder. Stimulation of these points can also be done by other methods, such as by burning the spot (moxibustion), pressing and massaging. Acupuncture points not only help in treatment but also in diagnosis.

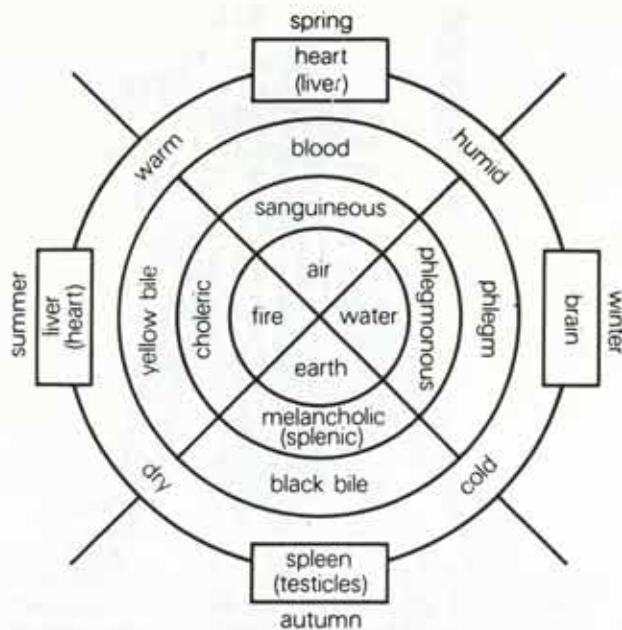
Acupuncture is believed to be of Chinese origin and can probably be traced back to the Stone Age when sharpened tools were used. In the ancient Chinese system a *bian* (the present meaning of *bian* is using stone to treat diseases) was used to treat various problems and relieve pain. This was later replaced by needles of bamboo and bones, and then bronze. Stainless steel needles are mostly



The astrological correspondence between the elements, the astrological signs, the parts of the human body and the letters of the Arabic alphabet according to *Shams al-Din al-Buni*.



Diagram of human anatomy from the *Tasbrib-i-munsuri*. Recreated.

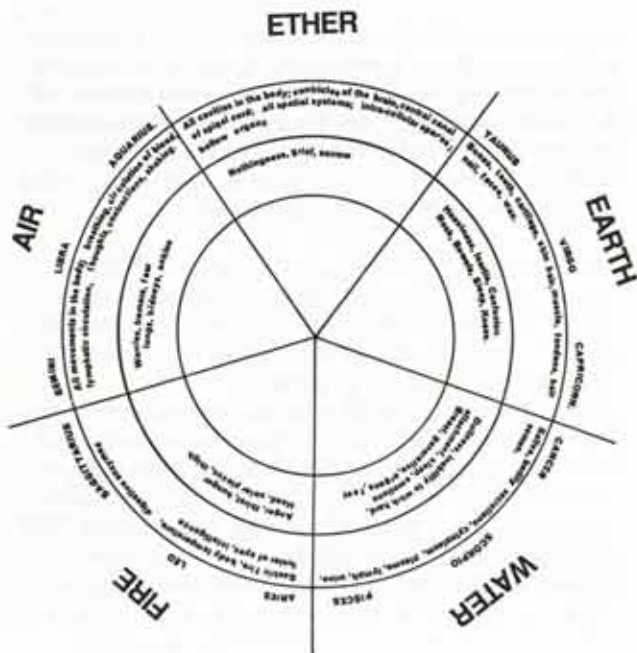


The theory that all things are made of differing combinations of four basic materials - fire, air, earth and water - was advanced by the Greek philosopher and scientist Empedocles. The four humours, that is blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile are composed of the elements and natures according to the above diagram. After the *Jabircan corpus*.

used today though for certain cases, needles of gold and silver are also applied.

The Humours

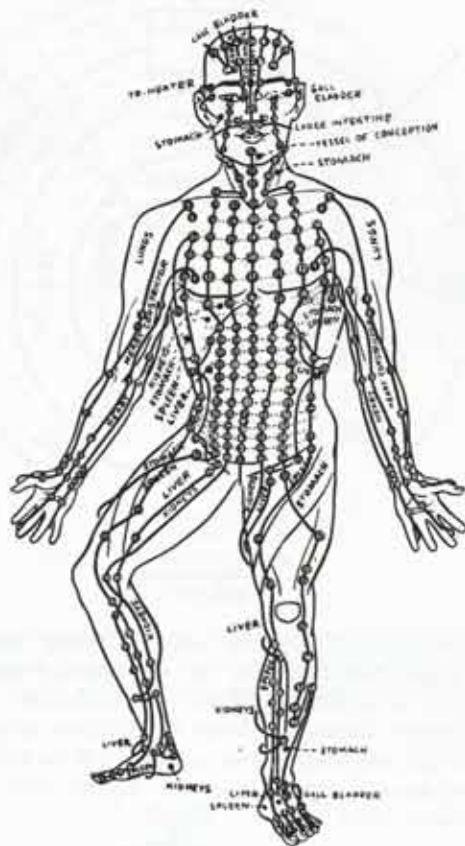
The theory of the basic elements in the Greek tradition was propounded by Empedocles in the 5th century BC. According to this tradition all things are made up of four basic elements—fire, air, water and earth. Each of the four elements is responsible for the four human natures—choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic and melancholic. Human body constitutes the four humours—yellow bile, blood, phlegm, black bile. Each humour is related to two natures and two elements, the precise qualities of which are at once same and different from other humours. They mix together to form the temperament of each person. Thus each individual not only has a unique temperament but also a unique physical constitution based on the particular combination of humours. In each case this combination tends towards a type of imbalance hence some are phlegmatic, others melancholic, choleric or sanguine. Also, each temperament possesses its own heat in addition to the innate heat found in everything.



This diagram gives a clear picture of the five elements and their somatic and psychosomatic relations with the human body. Although physical, these elements exert a strong effect on the mental faculties. After Ayurveda.

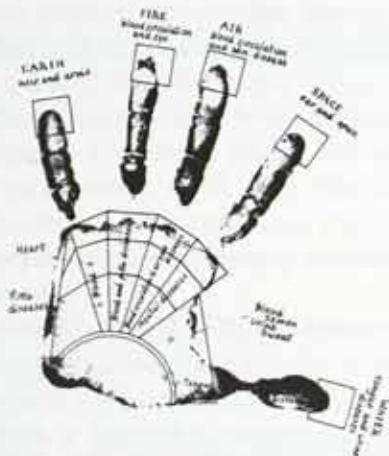


Zodiacal Man. The twelve signs of the Zodiac calendar are all associated with the basic elements. Thus Aries, Leo, Sagittarius are fire signs; Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn are earth signs; Gemini, Libra and Aquarius are air signs; Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces are water signs. Individuals born under each of these tend to possess the elemental qualities associated with the signs. This reflects in their character and constitution. After the *Epilogo en medicina*.

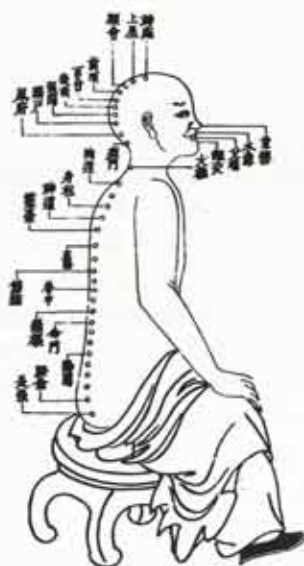


Acupuncture. The Chinese discovered about a thousand points on the skin where stimulation relieves or cures the disease. These points are divided into twelve systems. All the points belonging to any one system are connected by an invisible line called a meridian, and each meridian is linked with one of the major organs of the body, including the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys and bladder.

Acupuncture depends on the belief that in the healthy human body there is a continuous circulation of vital energy or life force. This energy is called *qi* (*chi*), which basically means air, based on the simple observation that you cannot live without breathing. *Qi* is the product of two great forces, or principles of polarities, called *yang* and *yin*. These forces run through the whole universe and everything which exists depends on the interplay between them. 'Life', as Felix Mann puts it, 'exists as the result of tension between two extremes', and their different forms of combination with each other produce the five basic elements of which everything is made, the elements of wood, fire, earth, metal and water. If they are thought of in terms of electricity, *yang* is the positive charge and *yin* the negative: if in terms of sex, *yang* is male and *yin* is female.



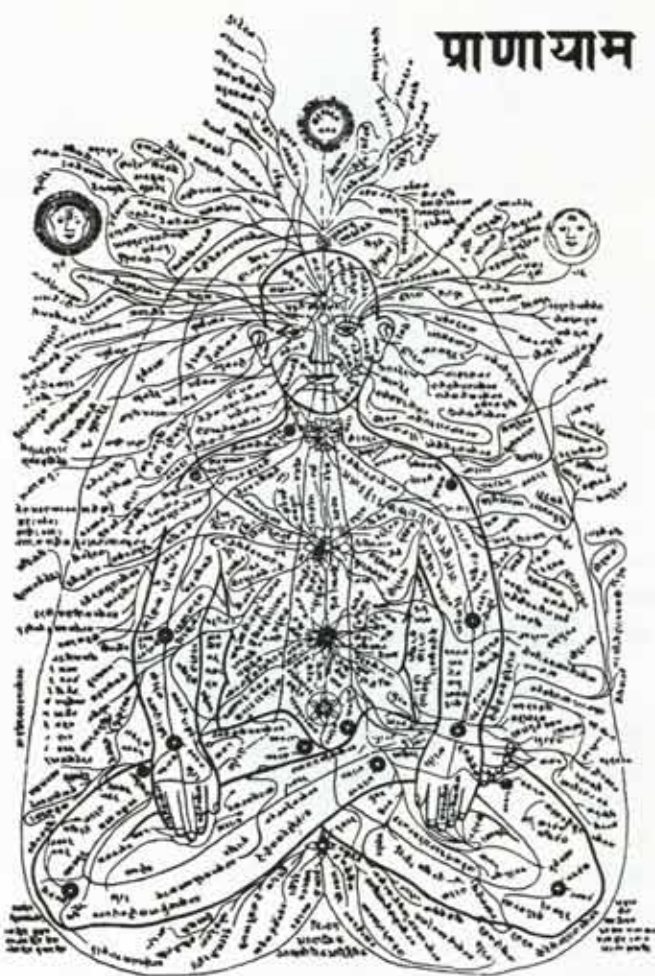
Astropalm. The astropalm, symbolically conceived as a miniature cosmos mapped the elements and the planets. The thumb was identified with the element water, the forefinger with ether, the middle finger with air, the ring finger with fire and the little finger with the element earth.



督脈經諸穴之圖

Ling-shu, an ancient Chinese medical text, contains twelve diagrams of man's inner force centres. The entire system, known as the grand circulation, is here divided into two courses. The descending or involuntary circulation runs from the lower lip, through the chest and abdomen to the tip of the spine. The rising or controlled circulation runs from the tip of the spine, along the spine itself and over the top of the head to the upper lip. The Taoist yogis couple deep, rhythmic breathing with visualization techniques to circulate psychic energies through this system of force centres, thus harmonising the polarities of *yin* and *yang* to awaken cosmic consciousness and bring about total identification with the macrocosm.

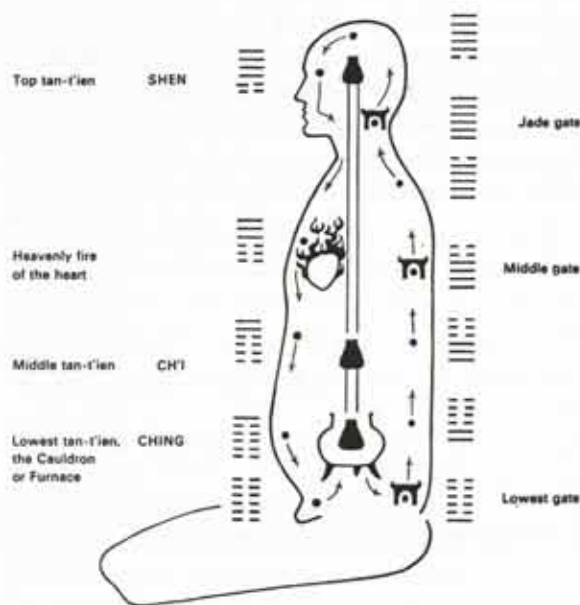
प्राणायाम



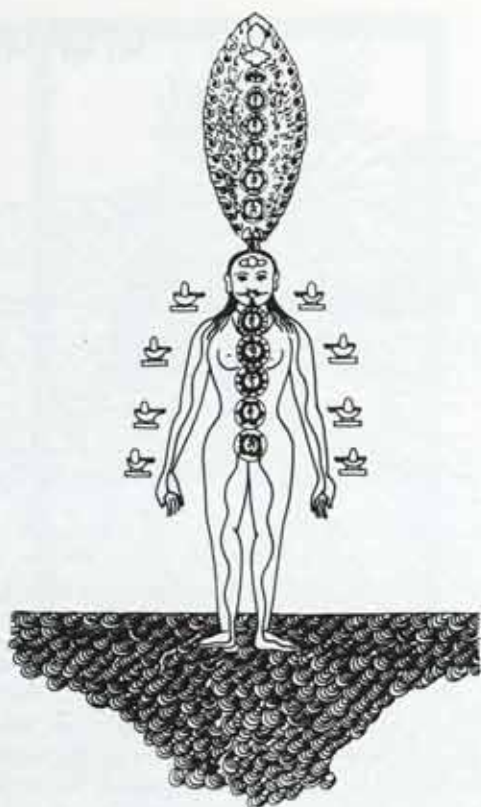
Energy channels in the subtle body.

According to Indian thought, the forces governing the cosmos on the macro-level govern the individual on the micro-level. Life is one, and all its forms are interrelated in a vastly complicated but inseparable whole. The human body, like electromagnetic bodies of the sun or the earth, has with our present knowledge expanded beyond its physical confines, revealing the subtle human faculties beyond the five senses: the aura of the 'etheric' body, and its organs - the *chakras* of religious tradition, the streams of *qi* energy which the acupuncturist traces—all of which emanations parallel and fuse with the energy rhythms of the planet, and beyond.

Nadi (from the root *nad* meaning motion, vibration), and of them the most important ones are the lunar *nadi*, *Ida*, the solar *nadi*, *Pingala*, and the central subtle channel, *sushumna*. Though attempts have been made to identify these subtle nerves with various parts of the human anatomy, they are untraceable by direct physical means. It is mainly through the mechanism of this etheric structure that the vital current of *Kundalini* is awakened.



The Taoist subtle body.

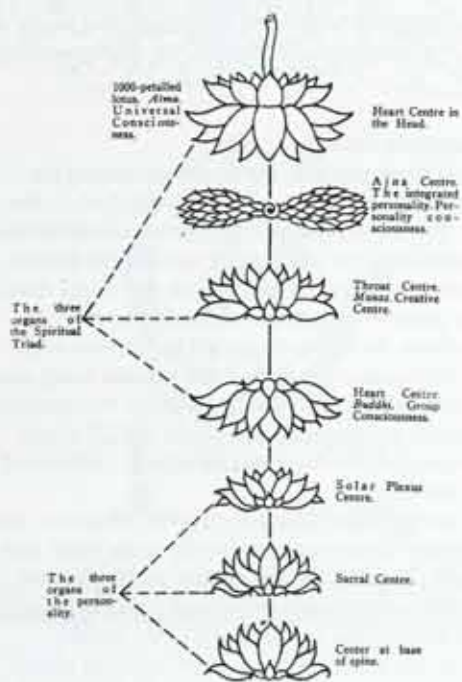


Body Cosmos

Traditional Indian teachings depict the *chakras* with a mandala-like design in the form of a wheel or flower. The circle contains a Sanskrit inscription representing the primary note of the centre; and with it a symbolic animal such as an elephant or antelope may be shown along with a god or goddess. The animals signify the character of the forces that manifest in the *chakra*; and the gods and goddesses symbolise the divine energies of a higher nature that accompany them. The circle is surrounded by a varying number of petals; upon each petal is a Sanskrit syllable representing a particular frequency or mystic sound which corresponds to the harmonies of the primary note at the centre of the wheel. The petals are seen as an expression of force and its apparent effect in matter.

The *muladhara* (*mula-root*) centre at the base of the spinal column between the anal orifice and the genital organs (sacral plexus) is the starting place of all the main *nadis*. The *sushumna* situated at the perineum, runs through the central channel of the spinal column and extends upto the crown of the head. On either side, and running parallel to it, are *ida* on the left and *pingala* on the right. Though *ida* and *pingala* separate from the *sushumna* at the *muladhara chakra*, they meet the *Sushumna* again in the region of *ajna chakra*, situated between the eyebrows (cavernous plexus), and again they divide and separate into the left and right nostrils. Along the *sushumna* channel there are the six major psychic centres also known as the *chakras*, and one above the head and lying outside the body; together they make the seven major psychic vortices in the subtle body. These *chakras* are revealed to practicing adepts only through yoga.

The iconography of the *chakras* is described thus:



The seven chakras in ascending plane symbolised as lotuses.

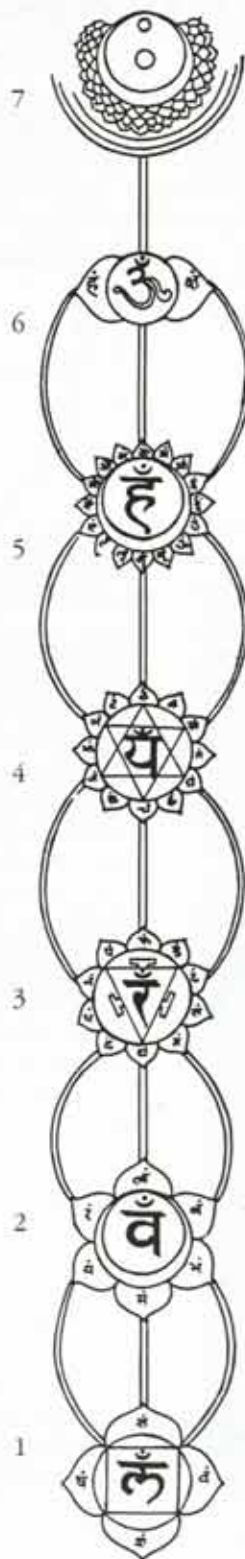
1. *Muladhara Chakra*, a major root centre of physical experience, is conceived of as having four red petals. Within a yellow square representing the earth element with the *bija mantra Lam*.

An inverted triangle is placed in the centre of the square, enclosing the unawakened and mysterious *Kundalini*, in trance-sleep and lying in three and a half coils around the *Svayambhu-linga*. This *chakra* is associated with the cohesive power of gross matter and the element of inertia, the sense of smell, etc. The presiding deity of the *chakra* is Brahma with the Sakti, Dakini. The four letters represent the root vibrations and are related to the power of speech.

2. *Svadhishthana* (pleasant) *Chakra*, the second centre in the ascending order of the *Kundalini*, is situated at the base of the genital organ with six vermillion petals. In the pericarp is represented the water element, stainless and luminously white, in the shape of a half moon with the *bija mantra* *Vam*. On top of the *bija mantra* sits the presiding deity Vishnu flanked by the Sakti, Rakini or Chakini. This *chakra* governs the sense of taste.

3. *Manipura* (gem-site) *Chakra*, near the navel (lumbar or epigastric plexus), is a blue lotus with ten petals. In the centre of the lotus a red triangle 'radiant like the rising sun' is related to the elements of fire. Its *bija mantra* is *Ram*. The presiding deity of this *chakra* is Rudra with the Sakti, Lakini. This Sakti is related to the sense of sight.

4. *Anabata* (unstruck) *Chakra*, in the region of the heart (cardiac plexus), has twelve petals. In the middle are two interpenetrating triangles of a smoky colour enclosing another golden triangle 'lustrous as ten million flashes of lightning', with a Banalinga inside the triangle. This *chakra*



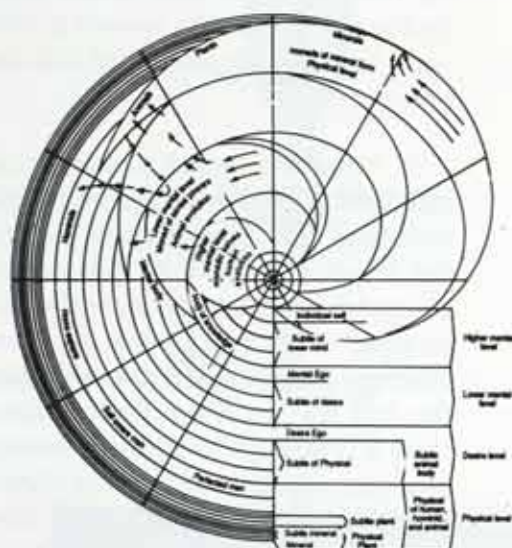
is associated with the element air, and above the triangles is presiding deity, the three-eyed Isa with Kakini Sakti (red in colour). Its *bija mantra* is *Yam* and it is principally associated with the sense of touch.

5. *Visuddha* (pure) *Chakra* is located at the juncture of the spinal column and medulla oblongata, behind the throat (laryngeal or pharyngeal plexus). It has sixteen petals and within its white pericarp is a white circle enclosing a triangle that is inscribed with the *bija mantra* *Ham*. The presiding deity is Sadasiva in his Ardhanarisavara (androgynous) aspect, and the *chakra* is associated with the element ether and controls the sense of hearing.

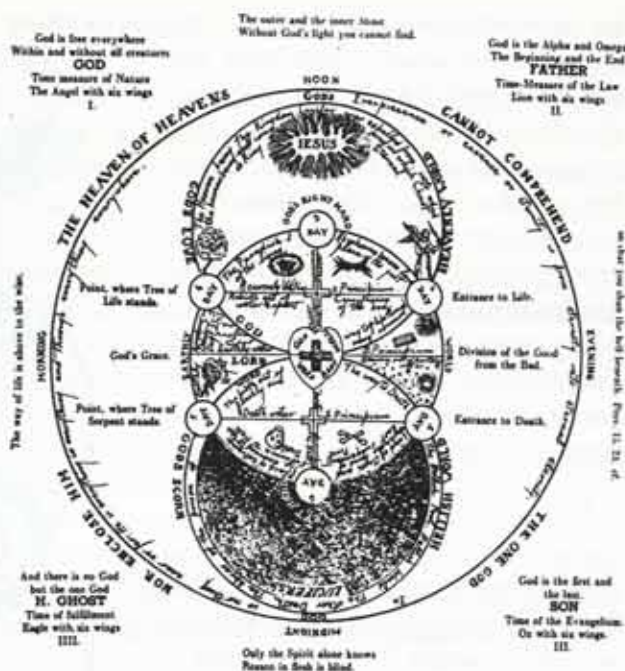
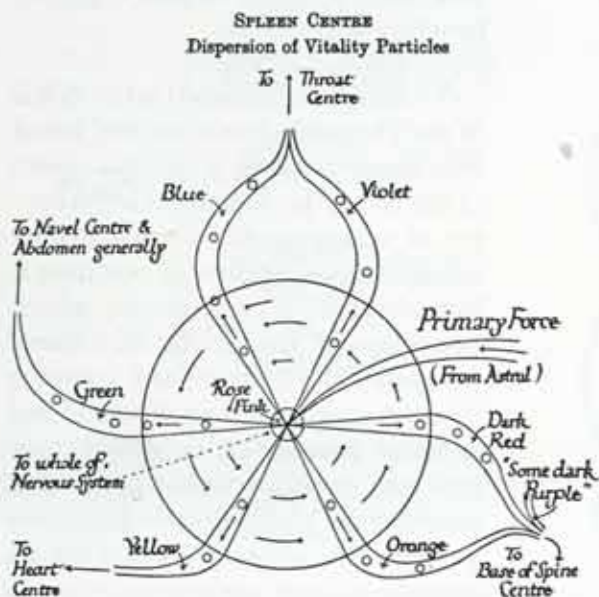
6. *Ajna* (command) *Chakra*, situated between the eyebrows, commands the various states of concentration realised through meditation. It is a two-petalled white lotus. In its centre is an inverted white triangle with the white *Itara-linga* and the *bija-mantra* *Om*. The tutelary Sakti is Hakini, and it is associated with the various cognitive faculties of the mind.

7. *Sahasrara* (thousand) is the 'Lotus of the Thousand Petals' located about four finger-breadths above the crown of the head. The *Sahasrara* is the centre of quintessential consciousness where the integration of all polarities is experienced. It is a centre which neutralises all sounds and all colours, integrates all cognitive and conative functions and embraces the static and dynamic energies of the various centres into an all-pervasive unity. It is here that the *Kundalini* terminates her journey after having traversed the six *chakras*.

CONSCIOUSNESS LEVEL GRAPHS



The chart depicts the various levels of the cosmic life that man lives within. The lowest and most physical aspect we are able to discern with our ordinary senses, but as the matter of each level becomes more attenuated the development of clairvoyance and finally intuition is required to observe the inner planes. The chart separates out each aspect of matter and illustrates it as a level; but in reality these planes interpenetrate each other to form a homogeneous field: the presence of soul and spirit, Christ and God, are immediate reality. No distance exists between the lower self and the reality.



According to various esoteric schools, the creation is divided into seven major planes of consciousness or matter. Man, made in the image of God, reflects this pattern through his manifestation upon the cosmic physical plane, and draws matter from the various levels in order to create bodies through which he can learn to express the divinity which lies at the heart of his being. So common is the concept of gradations of consciousness and substance that references to it can be found in Christianity, Theosophy, Buddhism, Yoga, Judaism, Rosicrucianism, Sufism, as well as in the teachings of ancient Greece and Egypt. It is also to be found in the Zoroastrian religion and the spiritual beliefs of the Polynesians. An understanding of these inter-related planes of consciousness is basic to any study of the subtle anatomy of man.

A modern interpretation of the relationship and energy flow between a *chakra* and an endocrine gland. The vitalizing energy of the sun is absorbed by the spleen *chakra* and distributed by way of the etheric body to the physical form.

ECOLOGY—HARMONY AND DISHARMONY

The ecocentric view of traditional societies is widely reflected in their attitudes towards plants, animals, rivers, and the earth. This reverential attitude concretised itself in iconography and imagery of the sculptural form. Art expression became a way of transmitting the timeless truths of man-nature ethics.

Primal cultures have always lived in harmony with their natural environment. Traditional ethos is based on the intrinsic realisation that man and nature are two parts of an indivisible whole, and therefore, must live in friendly partnership with each other. Out of this realisation stems their method of life and living, perfected over centuries.

Classical Indian myth is replete with similies that man is in unison with the environment. Rituals, which to modern man may seem mechanical and unnecessary, were traditional strategies to preserve an understanding of the intrinsic relationship of man with the biotic community. They acted as constant reminders to the common man that this world can support and nurture man only if man, in turn, nurtures it.

The similies contained in myths are translated in art, architecture, sculpture and literature. Many of them are of great ecological significance. They are imbued with divinity because their divinisation assures their preservation. Animals become the vehicles of gods, trees are endowed with the spirit of women, and the earth itself becomes a great goddess of benign benediction.

The personification of water in the term of river and ocean are integral to the Indian myth. All rivers are feminine and so associated with fertility (except the Bramhaputra, which is male). Most important of all rivers is the Ganga, and her sacredness is enshrined in the myth of *Gangavatarana* or the

Kurma the divine tortoise, is normally regarded as the Second incarnation of Visbnu. He resides in the Hiranmaya continent.

...the image of ...Kurma should be a tortoise in the form of a turtle.

Matsya Purana CCLIX 38-39



Kurma with lotus stalk in its mouth. Stone. Sanchi, 185-72 BC. Replica.

descent of the Ganges. This myth is represented in monumental proportion (27 m. x 9 m.) signifying its overwhelming importance, at Mammalapuram in Tamilnadu. Carved on two enormous boulders, it depicts the three planes of the cosmos and the abundance of animal life supported by the great river Ganga.

Water is the home of the fish of the crocodile and of the turtle. All of these are an indication of the well being of the waters. None of these could flourish in a polluted environment. The crocodile or *makara* is depicted as the vehicle of the river Ganga in art and iconography. The fish and turtle are the first two incarnations of the Lord Vishnu. The lotus is the most important of vegetative forms born of the waters—connected with the centre of the universe through its stem. It floats unsullied and pure above the mud wherein it is born. Physically, the lotus is a typical ecological statement of the processes of nature. Just as rivers are symbols of fertility so also are the water nymphs or *apsaras*.

In Chinese and South-East Asian cultures, dragons, snakes, shell-fish, dolphins, fish and so on are the emblems of waters, hidden in the depths of the ocean.

In Greek thought, nymphs are the divinities of the flowing waters of all springs and fountains. Poseidon, god of the sea, however, has a markedly male outline.



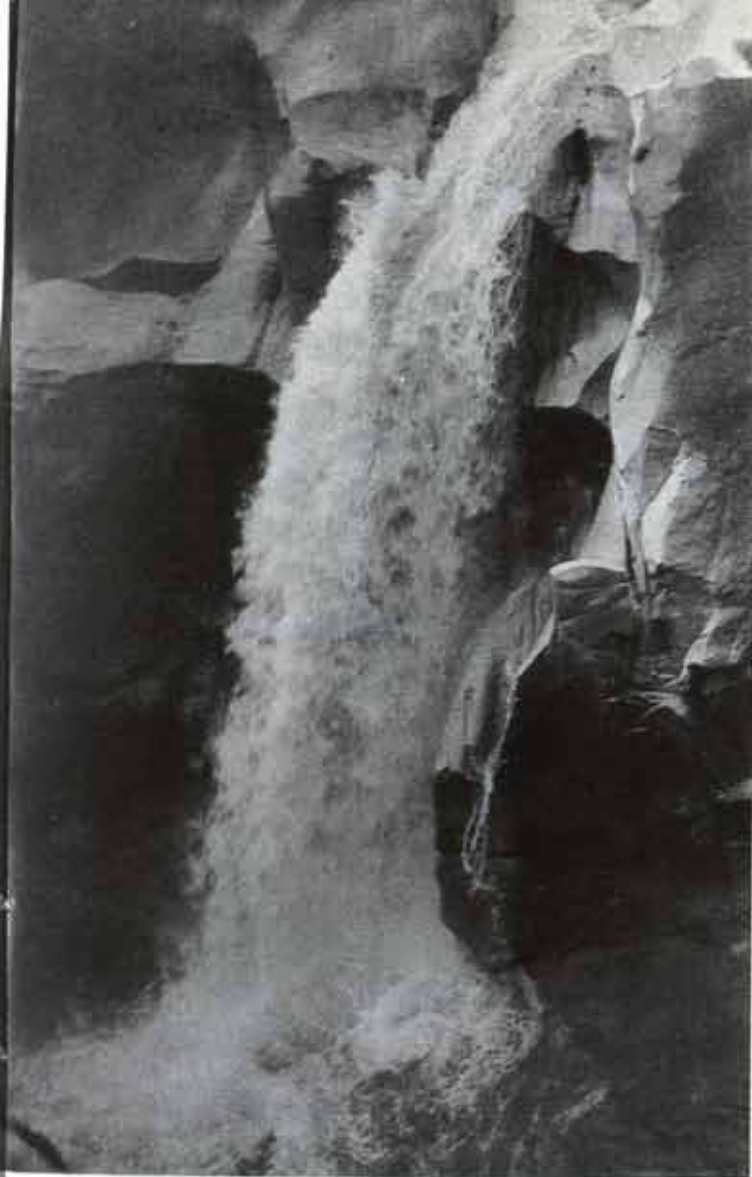
Nagi. Whitish Granite. Vijayanagar. 14-17th Century.



Lotus Symbol. Stone. Sanchi 185-72 BC. Replica.



Makara. Red sand stone. Sonkh, Mathura, 2nd century BC.



Gauri Kunda. Gangotri.

O Mother, you cascaded from the heavenly regions unto this earth, to remove the woes of the people. Shbankar, the destroyer of the three cities of demons, restricted your movements in his matted hair. O Mother, you indeed are the panacea for a number of ills of the dullards, the blind, the lame and the born deaf and dumb and of the ill-fated. You will indeed remove the ills of those who are abandoned by gods and those who are perpetually in the hell, you are the medicine par excellence.

GangaLabari



Gangavatarana: Descent of the Ganges. Colossal rock relief Mammala puram, Tamil Nadu. 7th century.

According to Indian mythology, the Ganges was brought down to the earth and netherworld by the penances of Bhagirath, descendant of Sagara, king of Ayodhya to atone for the sins of his ancestors and to bring them once more to life. Lord Shiva's matted locks acted as a breakwater to gentle the rush of water which would otherwise have split the world asunder.

The ecological message of this myth is as apparent as the physical reality of the course of the Ganga; the rich Deodara forests which are associated with the break waters of Shiva's matted locks through which is meanders. What is sanctified in the myth is both the ecological process as also the power of austere discipline to uphold the moral ecological order and not to destroy it.

In Indian tradition Prithvi, the Earth Mother, sustains all plant life. In India, traditional thought venerates plants, forest and herbs. This nourishing and nurturing ability of trees has made them infinitely precious as wondrous as the mother with her life-giving milk.

The earth is the receptacle of all that lives. Across cultures she is identified with the feminine, the productive and most importantly the mother. Upto the Renaissance, English farmers continued to call on *Erce, Eorthern moder* (Earth, mother of Earth) while planting. Similarly, upto the twentieth century, Russian farmers continued to call upon *Mati-Syra-Zemly* (Moist Mother Earth) for almost everything. Even the patriarchal Olympian gods swore their binding oaths by Mother Earth Gaea, called universal mother. She is the oldest of all divinities. The hymn dedicated to the Earth in the Atharva Veda sums up the traditional attitude of reverence.

*Impart to us those vitalizing forces
that come, O Earth from deep within your body,
your central point, your navel; purify us wholly.
The Earth is mother; I am son of Earth.
The Rain-giver is my father; may he shower on us
blessings!*

Atharva Veda 12.1.12

What could be a more lucid ecological statement of the intrinsic relationship of earth and man. The emphasis is on friendly partnership between man and his environs.



Mother goddess, terracota
Rajasthan



Mother goddess, terracotta
West Bengal



Mother goddess. Brass. Himachal Pradesh.

*Our Obeisance to you, Mother Jaber Era,
On the occasion of the Erak festival we offer to you
Young fowls, and freshly husked rice.
Accept it in pleasure.*

*We pray to you:
For every twelve seeds we sow, let there be twelve
And let not disease attack them.*

*If they attack, please subdue them.
Do not allow weeds and grass to grow among our
crops.
Do not allow disease and misfortune to befall our
village.
Bring us the rain-bearing clouds in plenty.
Bring them in time.*

*Let the earth green with out crops.
Let there be no hindrance to our movements.
Let there prevail among us
The spirit of mutual love and goodwill*

Santhal Song (Erok Sim Bonga)

The tree is sacred to all cultures. Principle amongst the Indian sacred trees is the *banyan*. The *peepul* under which no one may tell a lie, since it is the seat of the gods, the mango which must never be cut but for a funeral pyre, the *deodar* in the Himalayas, the *sal*, the *ashoka*, the *amaltas* or laburnum, the *neem*, the palm and scores of others are all ecologically important and therefore mythically significant. Primeval man understood the relation of water to vegetation through the tree and their centrality in the sustenance of the ecological balance. The medicinal properties of herbs such as *tulsi* and grasses such as *munja* are known to all our grand mothers. *Tulsi* is an anti-pollutant plant and is worshipped all over this country as the consort of Lord Vishnu on earth. The relationship between woman and tree dominates Indian myth

Plants, O ye Mothers, hail you as Goddess.

Yajur Veda IV, 2.6



Tree worship. Sanchi. Stone. 185-72 BC. Replica.



Ashwattha plant. Seal. Mohen-jo-daro, 2500 B.C. Replica.



TULSI

The servants of Yama do not come to this house in the vicinity of which there is a grove of Tulsi, due to the house having the nature of a holy place. O brahmana, the Tulsi grove is auspicious and removes all sins.

She (i.e., the Tulsi plant) was formerly planted by Vishnu for the good of all the worlds. The leaf and flower of Tulsi are valued in all good works.

There is the proximity of Vishnu, where there is Tulsi grove. Brahma also (lives) there, and also Lakshmi with all the hosts of gods.

Padma Purana IV.22.2.



Tree-shrines are a frequent sight in India. A pilgrim on his journey or a passer-by going about his daily life will see marks painted on a tree trunk, or the image of a deity installed at the foot of the tree. No elaborate ritual is necessary; simply bowing down or throwing a flower will help to create inner adjustment and oneness with the environment.

and the embodiment of the tree-spirit, tree *vrikshika* or *yakshi* is represented in an overwhelming degree in sculpture.

In the Christian world the tree again symbolises the reach to the sky. The tree that is revered above all is the oak. It is a symbol of fertility, the tree of life. It was sacralised by the druids as well. The cyprus is another tree which is deeply appreciated. Shrubs like the holly and mistletoe too are peren-

nial symbols of Christianity. The Hellenistic world also venerated the oak but to them the laurel shrub was the pride for the victor, the symbol of glory and authority. The olive tree was a symbol of peace and purity.

In Japan, the Samurai or warrior class were instructed to model their lives in the blossoming of apricot, cherry, plum, peach and apple trees which are short, yet brilliant.



Yaksha, tree spirit. Stone. Sarvahana Pitalkhora, Maharashtra. 2nd Cent. BC. Replica.

Hymn to the forest

*Sprite of the Forest, Sprite of the Forest,
slipping so quietly away,
how is it that you avoid people's dwellings?
Have you no fear all alone?*

*When the cicada emits his sbrill notes
and the grasshopper is his accompanist,
It's the Sprite of the Forest they hail with their praises,
as with cymbals clashing in procession.*

*Cows seem to loom up yonder at pasture,
what looks like a dwelling appears.
Is that a cart with creaking wheels?
The Sprite of the Forest passes!*

*Hark! There a man is calling a cow,
another is felling a tree.
At evening the guest of the Sprite of the woods
fancies he bears someone scream!*

*The Sprite of the Forest never slays,
unless one approaches in fury.
One may eat at will of her luscious fruits
and rest in her shade at ones pleasure.*

*Adorned with fragrant perfumes and balms,
she needs not to to toil for her food.
Mother of untamed forest beasts,
Sprite of the wood, I salute you!*

Rig Veda 10.146



Varaha Avatar: Boar incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The massive rock-relief at Udagiri Madhya-Pradesh, 4th Century. In his third incarnation or *avatar*, Vishnu is said to have taken the form of a boar to rescue the Earth Goddess. The Goddess had been imprisoned at the bottom of the

ocean, in the nether world, by a demon who had laid waste to the earth, thereby causing havoc to the order of things. The Boar or *Varaha* as he is called, fought and killed the demon and released the Earth Mother by carrying her on his tusk to once more float free on the cosmic waters.

Environmental Ethics

Traditional social ethics placed great emphasis on the values, beliefs and attitudes that would help man to live in harmony with nature. Even as early as the time of Ashoka (272-232 BC), his imperial edicts were revolutionary for his time. For the first time, perhaps in the history of the world, ecological concerns became state concerns. His edicts were inscribed on pillars and on rocks, in the language of the common man. They laid down rules of conduct that had to be obeyed with respect to the environment. Non-compliance was served with punishment. The concept of sinning against nature already existed in various religious systems.

He who injures innocuous beings from a wish to give himself pleasure, never finds happiness, whether living nor dead.

Manusmriti 5.45

The destruction of forests is most dangerous for the nation and human beings. Vanaspati has direct relation with the well being of society. Due to the pollution of the natural environment and the destruction of the forest, many diseases crop up to ruin the nation.

Charaka Samhita, Vimansthan, 3.2.

In Buddhism, the *Suttapitaka* says:

Even the branch of the tree must never be cut where beneath the shade have ever sheltered, taken rest or slept. Malicious concept for companion is a crime.

Zoroastrian purity is not next to godliness, but part of godliness itself. The Parsis understood the need for ecological preservation. The fact that, to the Zoroastrian nature was a phenomenon that inspired wonder and praise is evident from the musicality of their eulogies: 'we praise the flow of flowing waters and the flight of flying birds . . .' (YS.42.6). They venerated nature and promised punishment for those who harmed it. As said:

He who does any kind of animal harm... he acts lawlessly with his own soul.

Boyce, 1991, p. 428

The Quran 91:10-11 believes,

*Blessed now is he who bath kept it pure (the world).
And undone is he who bath corrupted it.*

Principal amongst environmental action programmes in India are the Chipko movement in the Garhwal Himalayas to prevent deforestation. The movements against the construction of big and environmentally unsound dams on rivers in the Tehri Garhwal and in the Narmada river basin led by the Narmada Bachao Andolan. The victory at Silent Valley in Kerala will always remain a milestone and inspiration in this continuing struggle. It is imperative for us to understand and act upon the philosophy of this Chipko song before it is too late.

*What do the forests bear?
Soil, water and pure air.
Soil, water and pure air
Sustain the earth and all she bears.*

What we need today is a re-examination of ourselves and our motives and of those attitudes reflected in our myth and legend, in our rites and rituals that we have left behind in our struggle for 'development'. What we need today is a benediction.

*Peace be to earth and to airy spaces!
Peace be to heaven, peace to the waters,
Peace to the plants and peace to the trees!
May all the Gods grant me peace!
By this invocation of peace may peace be diffused!
By this invocation of peace may peace bring peace!
With this peace the dreadful I appease,
With this peace the cruel I appease,
With this peace all evil I appease,
So that peace may prevail, happiness prevail!
May everything for us be peaceful!*

Yajur Veda 36.17.14

Traditional Codes on Environmental Ethics

The Beloved of the gods, King Priyadarsin, spoke thus:

When I am crowned twenty-six years, these various animals are declared by me inviolable, viz.- Parrots, mainas, the aruna, ruddy geese, wild ducks, the nandimukba, the gelata, bats, the amba-kapilika, small tortoises, boneless fish, the vedaveyaka, the Ganga-puputaka, the sankuja-fish, large tortoises and porcupines, squirrels, young deer, bulls, the okapinda, wild asses, white pigeons, village pigeons, and all quadrupeds which are neither useful nor edible.

Those she-goats, ewes and sows that are either with young or are giving milk to their young, are inviolable, and also those of their young ones which are less than six months old.

Cocks are not to be caponised.

Husks containing living beings like insects are not to be burnt.

Forests are not to be burnt, either uselessly or for killing animals.

One animal is not to be fed with another animal.

On the three caturmasis, on these three days during the Tisya full moon, the fourteenth, the fifteenth, and the first tithi - and invariably on every fast day, fish are inviolable and are not to be sold.

On these very same days, those other classes of animals that live in elephant-parks and in fishermen settlements, are also not to be slain.

On the eighth tithi of every lunar fortnight, on the



fourteenth, on the fifteenth, on Tisya, and on Punarvasu, on the three caturmasis, and on auspicious days, bulls are not to be castrated, and he-goats, rams, boars and other animals that are usually castrated, are not to be castrated. On Tisya, on Punarvasu, on the caturmasis, and during the fortnight of every caturmasi, the branding of horses and bullocks is not to be done. Till I had been crowned twenty-six years—during this period, prisoners were released by me twenty-five times.

Rock Edict II, Ashoka Abhilekha

That two designs have been cherished by Piyadassi—one regarding men and other relating to animals—that everywhere some vegetable root and fruit trees shall be cultivated, and that on the roads wells shall be dug and trees planted to give enjoyment for both men and animals.

Dighanikaya

SIN

For when he (the soul) commits sin against the sacred Waters and Plants, even when it is committed against merely a single twig of it, and he has not atoned for it, when he departs from this world, the spirits (Fravasbis) of all the plants in the world will stand up high in front of that man and prevent him from entering paradise.

There it is said that the lord will judge men according to how they have treated the animals and that the souls of the animals will themselves accuse at judgement day the souls of those who have fed them ill- "and he who does any kind of animal harm in secret --he acts lawlessly with his own soul".

Boyce: 1991, History of Zoroastrianism p.428

SACRED EARTH

*Whether we stand upright or sit,
whether we stay quite still or walk,
whether we walk with right foot or left,
never may we stumble upon Earth!*

*O purifying Earth, I you invoke!
O patient Earth, by Sacred Word enhanced,
bearer of nourishment and strength, of food and ghee—
O Earth, we would approach you with due praise!*

*Whatever I dig up of you, O Earth,
may you of that have quick replenishment!
O purifying one, may my thrust never
reach right unto your vital points, your heart!*

Atharva Veda 12.1.28, 29, 35.

WORLD SOUL

With a further mixing of the elements, the establishment of a higher degree of purity and a closer approach to equilibrium, a new faculty of the World Soul or, one may say, a new soul, joins the world of the elements to form the plant kingdom. This vegetative soul (al-nafs al-nabatiyah) has the three powers of feeding (ghadhiyah), growth (namiyah), and reproduction (muwallidah), in addition to all the powers of the mineral kingdom. It is in terms of these faculties that Ibn Sina explains the life of plants.

Ibn Sina

POLLUTION

From pollution two types of diseases occur in human beings. The first which is related with body and other with the mind, and both are interrelated. One follows the other and none exists without another. Sometimes physical disease creates the mental and vice versa. Cool, warm and air—these are three virtues of the body. They are called kapha and vata, pitta. When they are balanced in body it is free from disease.

Mahabharata, Rajadharamanushsan 16.8.4

The polluted air is mixed with bad elements. The air which is against the virtues of season, with full of moisture, speedy, hard, icy cool, hot dry, harmful terribly roaring, colliding from two or three sides, badsmelling oily, full of dirt, smoke, sand and steam creates diseases in body and is polluted.

Charaka Samhita, Vimanasthana 3.6.1

CHIPKO

*Sister, it is a fight to protect
Our mountains and forests.
They give us life
Embrace the life of the living trees and streams
Clasp them to your hearts
Resist the digging of mountains
That brings death to our forests and streams
a fight for life has begun
At Sinsyaru Kbal*

*What do the forests bear?
Soil, water and pure air.
Soil, water and pure air
Sustain the earth and all she bears.*

MOTHER NATURE

Nature! We are surrounded and embraced by her; powerless to separate ourselves from her, and powerless to penetrate beyond her.... We live in her midst and know her not. She is incessantly speaking to us, but betrays not her secret... She has always thought and always thinks; though not as a man, but as Nature... she loves herself, and her innumerable eyes and affections are fixed upon herself. She has divided herself that she may be her own delight. She causes an endless succession of new capacities for enjoyment to spring up, that her insatiable sympathy may be assuaged... The spectacle of Nature is always new, for she is always renewing the spectators. Life is her most exquisite invention; and death is her expert contrivance to get plenty of life.

Goethe

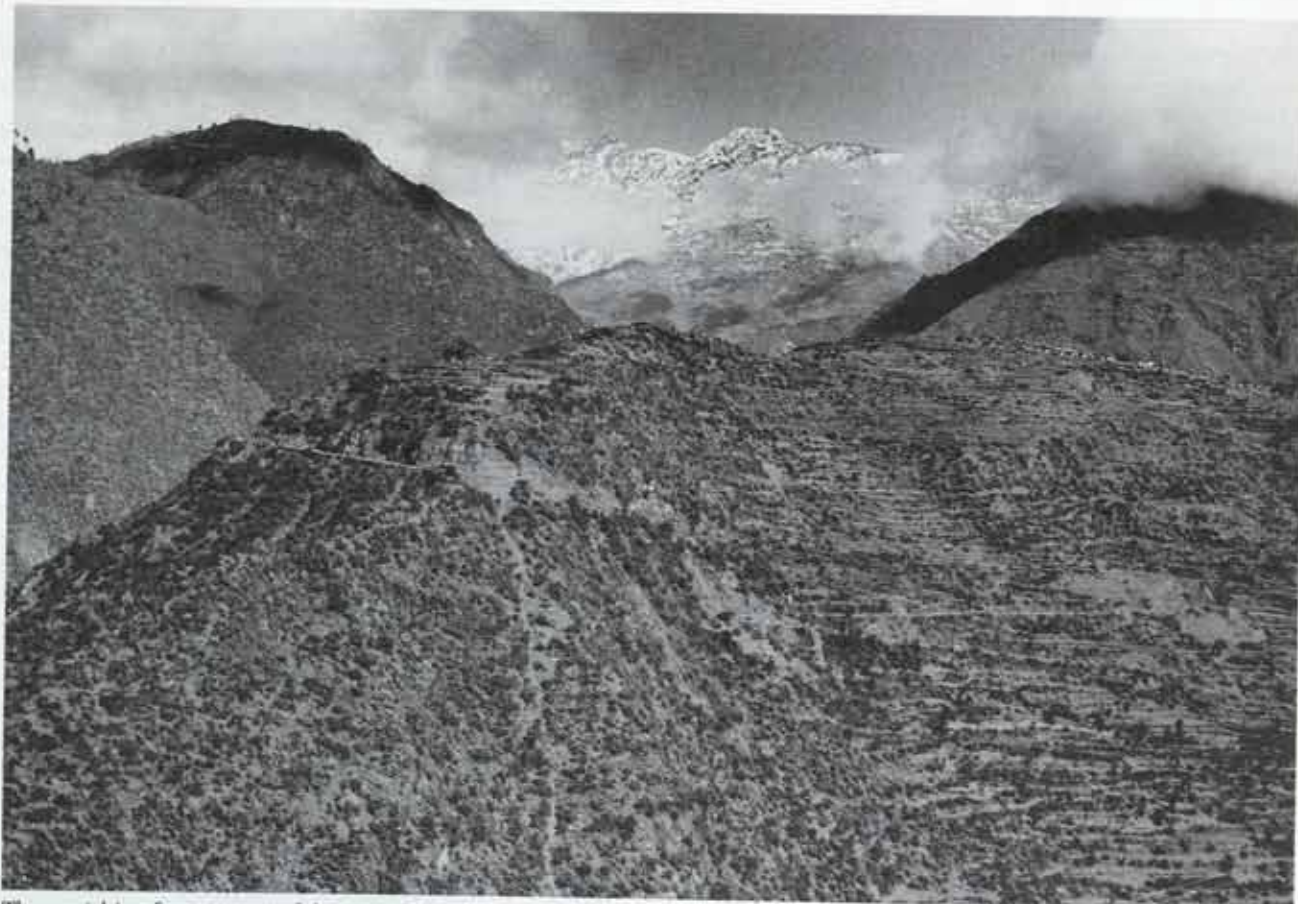


MOTHER EARTH

*Shall I take a knife and tear my mother's bosom?
Then when I die she will not take me to her bosom to rest. You ask me to dig for stone! Shall I dig under her skin for her bones? Then when I die I cannot enter her body to be born again. You ask me to cut grass and make hay and sell it and be rich like the white men! But how dare I cut off my mother's hair?*

Native American Chief Wanapuri Tribe

Desecration



The vanishing forest cover of the Himalaya.

*O sad, sad earth,
A guilt not yours has burdened you with blood.
You who are kind to spring, and youth and hope
You gave your mirth
Unstinted to the smiling eyes of dawn
And blessed alike the mountain and the flood;*

*From your green store
Of seasonal life you nourished us, but we
Blackened your gifts with the dark scum of hate;
From shore to shore
We spread our brothers' blood upon your breast
And marred the day that gave us light to see.*

*O patient earth,
The warring nations you have borne shall cease
At the last shock of self-delivered death.
Then to that dearth
Of life quenched in the charred and quiet bone
Your still will offer, they accept, your peace.*

Francis Story

We abuse the land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong we may begin to use it with love and respect.

Aldo Leopold, 1886-1948, American Forester

No one seeing the iconoclasts raging thus against wood and stone would doubt that there is a spirit hidden in them which is death-dealing, not life-giving, and which at the first opportunity will also kill men.

Martin Luther, 1525

The earth can satisfy our needs but not our greed.

Mahatma Gandhi

POETRY

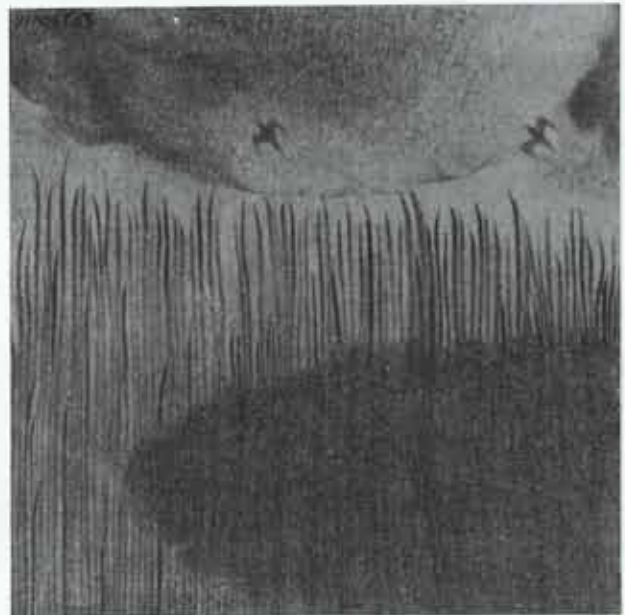
The elements have been a source of inspiration for creative expression in poetry. The poems reflect the agony and ecstasy of man's deep concern for the natural environment.

*The Vegetative universe opens like a flower from the
Earth's centre
In which is Eternity. It expands in Stars to the Mundane
shell
and there it meets Eternity again, both within and
without,
and the abstract Voids between the stars are the
Satanic Wheels.
There is the Cave, the Rock, the tree, the lake of
Udan Adan,
The Forest and the marsh and the Pits of bitumen
deadly,
The Rocks of solid fire, the Ice valleys, the plains
Of burning sand, the rivers, contract & Lakes of Fire,
The Islands of the fiery Lakes, the Trees of malice,
Revenge
And black Anxiety, and the Cities of the Salamandrine
men,
(But whatever is visible to the Generated man
Is a creation of mercy & love from the Satanic void.)
The land of darkness flamed, but no light and no
repose:
The land snows of trembling & of iron hail incessant:
The land of earthquakes, and the land of woven
Labyrinths:
The land of snares & traps & wheels & pitfalls & dire
mills:
The Voids, the Solids & the land of clouds & regions of
waters
With their inhabitants, in the Twenty-seven Heavens
beneath Beulah:
Self-righteousness, conglomerating against the divine
Vision:
A Concave Earth wondrous, Chasmal, Abyssal,
Incoherent,*

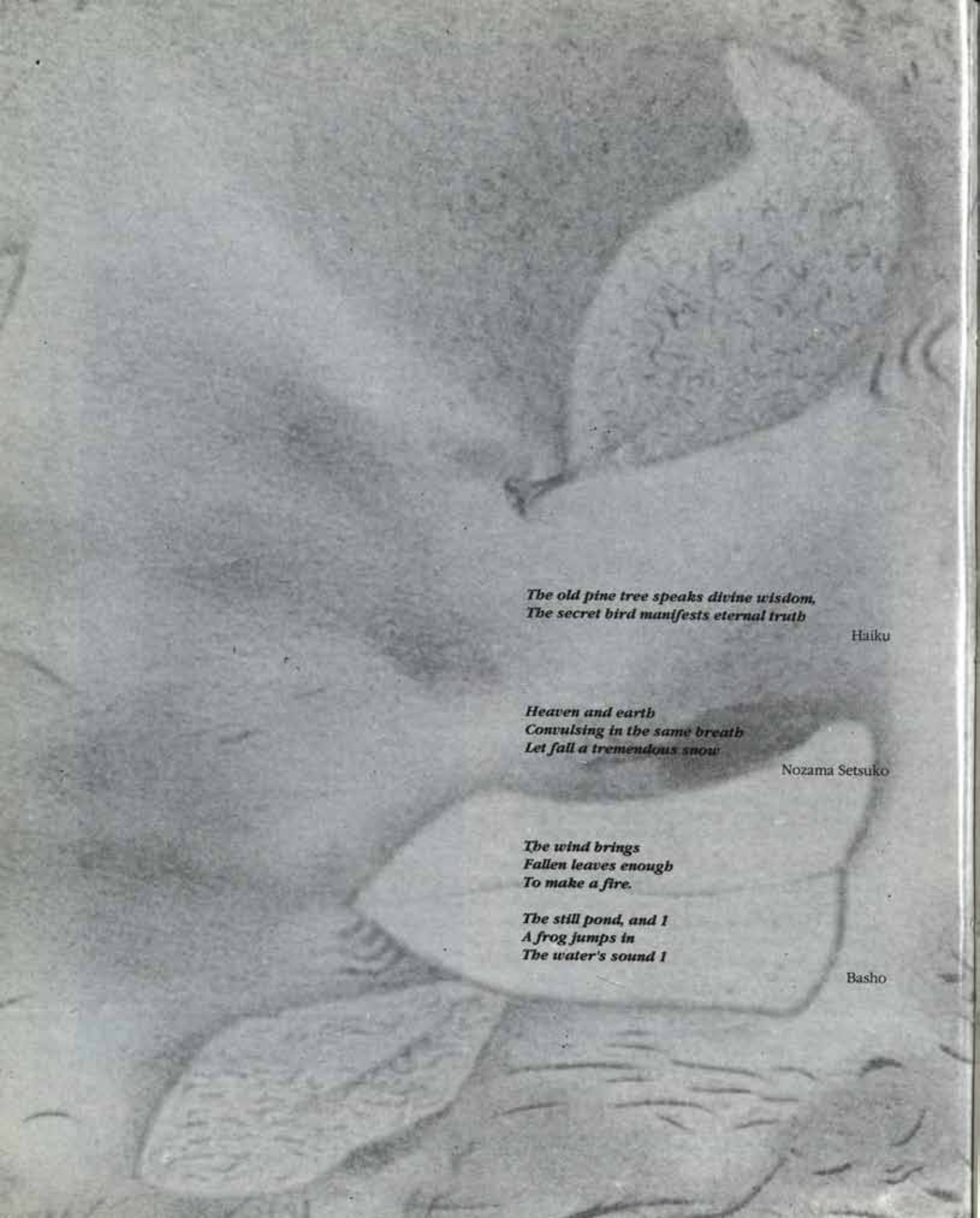
*Forming the Mundane Shell: above, beneath, on all
sides surrounding
Golgonooza. Los walks round the walls night and day.*
William Blake

*To see the world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
and Eternity in an hour.*

William Blake



Low clouds.



*The old pine tree speaks divine wisdom,
The secret bird manifests eternal truth*

Haiku

*Heaven and earth
Convulsing in the same breath
Let fall a tremendous snow*

Nozama Setsuko

*The wind brings
Fallen leaves enough
To make a fire.*

*The still pond, and 1
A frog jumps in
The water's sound 1*

Basho

I have seen

*A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell;
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intensely; and his countenance soon
Brightened with joy; for from within were heard
Murmurings, whereby the minitor expressed
Mysterious union with his native sea.
Even such a shell the universe itself
Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
authentic tidings of invisible things;
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
and central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation.*

William Wordsworth

*Very old are the woods;
And the buds that break
Out of the brier's boughs,
When March winds wake,
So old with their beauty are
Oh, no man knows
Through what the wild centuries
Roves back the rose.*

*Very old are the brooks;
And the hills that rise
Where snow sleeps cold beneath
The azure skies
Sing such a history
Of come and gone,
Their every drop is as wise
As Solomon.*

*Very old are we men;
Our dreams are tales
Told in dim Eden
By Eve's nightingales;
We wake and whisper awhile,
But, the day gone by,
Silence and sleep like fields
Of amaranth lie.*

Walter de la Mare

Song of the Sea
capri, Piccola Marina

*Primeval breath from the sea,
sea-wind by night;
you come unseekingly;
one lying till light
must seek and find what he
may interpose:
primeval breath from the sea;
that only blows
as for primeval stone,
pure space
rushing from realms unknown...
in the moonlight alone.*

Rilke

*...when the planets
In evil mixture to disorder wander,
What plagues and what portents, what mutiny,
What raging of the sea, shaking of earth,
commotion in the winds, frights changes horrors,
Divert and crack, rend and deracinate
The unity and married calm of the states
Quite from their fixture.*

William Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida,
Act I scene 3, 93-101

*A tree
Predestined to beauty.
Blown leaves. Antiquity.
Light lost. Light found.*

*The myth above the myth.
The imagined zenith
Of youth in youth.*

*Light on the leaves in wind
Flying. The silver sequined
Goat-leaf, dark skinned.*

Vernon Watkins

*It is a wonder foam is so beautiful.
A wave bursts in anger on a rock, broken up
in wild white sibilant spray
and falls back, drawing in breath with rage,
with frustration how beautiful!*

D.H. Lawrence

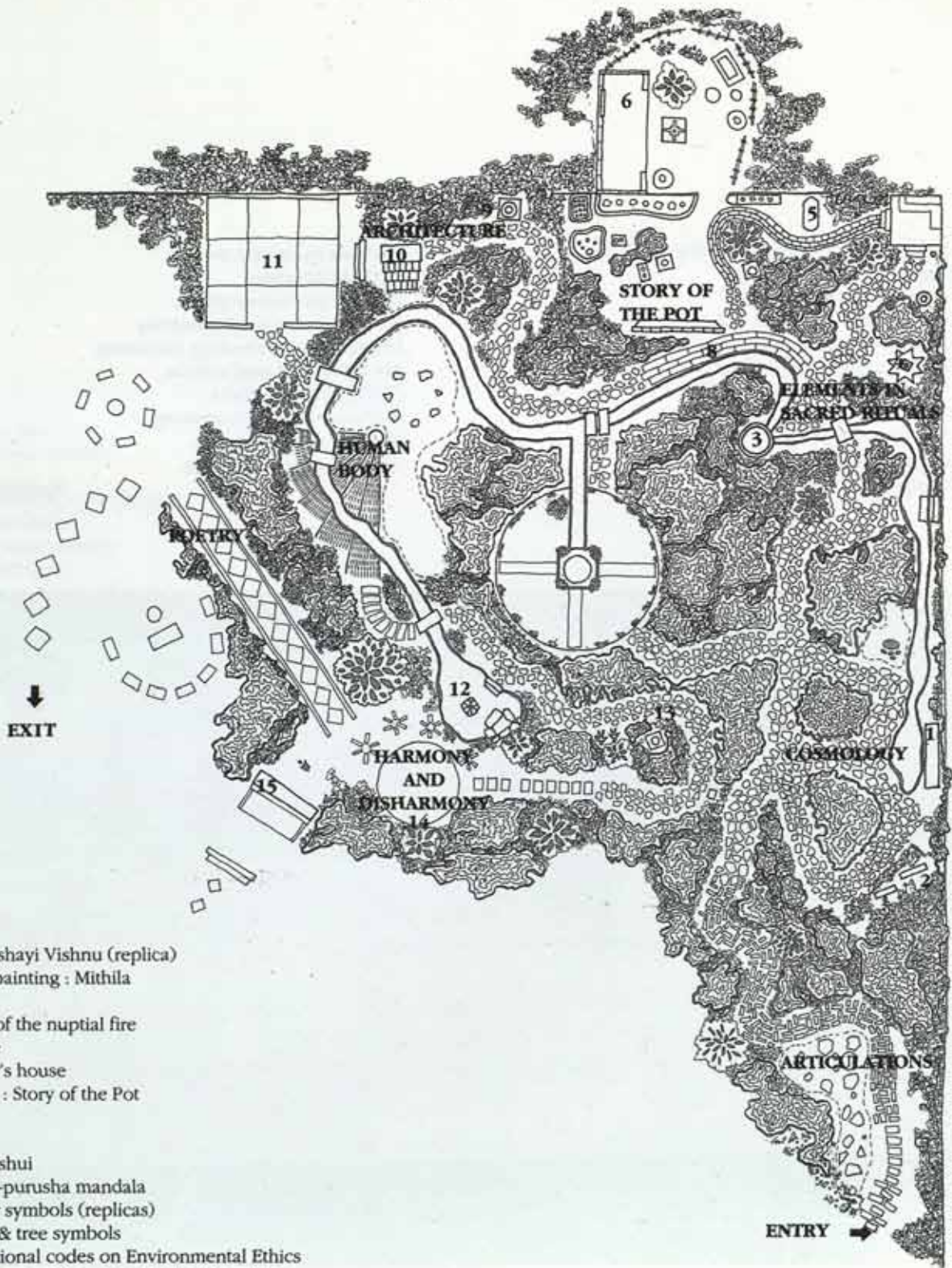
*Singing without joy, whistling to no one;
Signifying nothing wind
You are yet of my kind,
Habitant of the same hills,
Wanderer over the same waters,
Beater against cliff-face,
We are the one world's way,
Move in the universal courses;
You blow over,
Breath through me always.
Companionless,*

*Without trace you are,
Without identity,
Without person or place,
Without name or destination,
Unbeginning, unending, unresting,
Are but speed and motion,
Crying without voice,
Without memory lamenting,
Without grief moaning,
Without anger storming,*

Kathleen Raine



Silent Singer.



EXHIBITS

1. Seshashayi Vishnu (replica)
2. Wall painting : Mithila
3. Well
4. Altar of the nuptial fire
5. Grave
6. Potter's house
7. Mural : Story of the Pot
8. Ghats
9. Stupa
10. Feng-shui
11. Vastu-purusha mandala
12. Water symbols (replicas)
13. Plant & tree symbols
14. Traditional codes on Environmental Ethics
15. Boar incarnation of lord Vishnu (replica)

CREDITS

Concept

Kapila Vatsyayan

Research Consultant	:	Madhu Khanna
Consultant	:	Haku Shah
(Story of the Pot exhibit)		
Research Team	:	Radhika Bhatia
		Ritu Varuni
		Vibhuti Chakravarty
		Mamta Rani
Design consultant	:	Amardeep Behl
Design Team	:	Radhika Choudhuri
		Sophie Gaur
		Soumitri Vardarajan
		Dharmendra Singha
		Ruchira Biswas
Production	:	Ravinder Kharab
		Alok Saxena
Graphics	:	Rahul Gajjar & Associates
Catalogue Cover	:	Vineet Kumar
Photography for Catalogue	:	Manjit Debashis
Replicas (Plaster cast)	:	E. Duncan and Team
Site Work	:	Abdul Rehman & Team
Horticulture	:	Central Public Works Department
Wood Carving	:	Salim & Team
Crafts Persons		
(Story of the Pot exhibit)		
Painters	:	Ganesh, Teju
Potters	:	Ibrahim, Sara, Mohan Lal
		Babu Ben, Mahesh, Mohan
Madhubani Painters	:	Gunjeshwari Devi, Ambika Devi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the following for loans of objects, photographs, drawings and replicas:

Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi; Bhandarkar Research Institute, Pune; Crafts Museum, New Delhi; Embassy of Greece, New Delhi; Hera's Institute of History & Culture, Bombay; Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage, New Delhi; Japan Cultural Centre, New Delhi; K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, Bombay; National Museum, New Delhi; Sanskriti, New Delhi; Shakti Anusandhan Kendra, Roorkee; Spandan, New Delhi; Tantra Foundation, New Delhi; Tibet House, New Delhi; Tibetan Institute of Astro Medicine, Dharamshala.

We have benefitted from discussions with the following scholars and/or resource persons:

Anuradha Shah; Bettina Baumer; Brij Tankha; B.S. Kashyap; Dharmadhikari; Irene Winter; Jyotinder Jain; Keshav Malik; Khojeste Mistry; Lokesh Chandra; Martha Vannucci; M.N. Deshpande; Pilloo Jungalwalla; Saroja Bhate; Vinod Verma.

We are grateful to the following authors and photographers whose works have been used in the publication.

TEXTUAL RESOURCES: Ali, Maulvi Mohammed. *The Holy Quran*. Trans. Ahmadiya Anjuman-i-inshaat, 1920; *Architecture + Design. A Journal for the Indian Architect* Vol VII No. 4 July-Aug. 1991 and Vol VIII No. 5 Sept. Oct., 1991; Boyce, Mary and Frantz Grenet. *A History of Zoroastrianism, Vol III*, Leiden, 1991; Dwivedi, O.P. *World Religions and the Environment*. New Delhi, 1989; Eliade, M.Ed., *The Encyclopaedia of Religion* 16 Vols. New York, 1987; Hayward Gallery. *In The Image of Man*. (Exhibition. Catalogue). London, 1982; Hume, Robert Enst. *The Thirteen Principal Upanisads*, London, 1971; India International Centre Quarterly. *Indigenous Vision*, Vol. 19, Nos. 1 & 2, Delhi, 1992; India International Centre Quarterly. *Holistic Health*. Summer-Monsoon 1991; Johri, Harish. *Chakras, Energy Centres of Transformation*. Rochester, 1987; Kenton, Warren. *Astrology*. London, 1974; Khanna, Madhu. *Yantra*, London 1979; Lawlor, Robert, *Sacred Geometry*. London, 1982; *Man, Myth & Magic. An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Mythology, Religion and the Unknown*. London, 1983; John, Michel. *The Earth Spirit, Its ways, shrines, and mysteries*. New York, 1975;

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PHOTOGRAPHIC RESOURCES: Dilwali, Ashok and Pushpesh Pant. *Ganga*, New Delhi, 1987; Gandhi, Indira. *Eternal India*. London, 1980; Ghosh, Leila and Dalia Roy. *Ganga*, Bombay, 1986; Goswamy, B.N. *Essence of Indian Art*. San Francisco, 1986; Isaacs, Jennifer. *Australian Dreaming, 10,000 years of Aboriginal History*, London, 1980; Shear Alistair & Peter Russell (Photographs by Richard Lannoy). *The Upanisads*, London, 1978; Time-life Books, *Indien*, Newyork, 1986; Wilson, Henry. *Benaras*, London, 1985.

Drawings in the Poetry section are by Vineet Kumar.

* Technical terms in the text are given in italics.

