

Ayahuasca, Tobacco and DNA – The Mother, The Son and the Holy Ghost:

In *The Cosmic Serpent* by Jeremy Narby, the author describes how his work as an anthropologist in Brazil led him to experience many divergent uses of tobacco. One man used tobacco as a healing agent, blowing smoke onto a sick child. The man said that Ayahuasca had led them to the use of tobacco. Ayahuasca is often called the mother, whereas Tobacco is the child. Both Ayahuasca and Tobacco attract the spirits (souls). "Souls like tobacco because tobacco has its method, its strength. It attracts the maninkari (spirits). It is the best contact for the life of a human being."

Amongst the people of the Amazon, the belief in spirits as real phenomena is common, but so is the awareness that contact with spirits gives power not only to cure but to harm.

Not all societies and Shamans in the Amazon use hallucinogens, but in Western Amazonia, which includes the Peruvian, Ecuadorian and Columbian part of the basin, it is hard to find a culture that does not use psychoactive plants. According to one inventory, there are 72 Ayahuasca-using cultures in Western Amazonia. "Civilized" people have been extraordinarily reluctant to accept that plants can communicate knowledge to human beings through their ingestion. In his 2001 book *The Botany of Desire*, Michael Pollan discussed the idea that every plant contains a level of knowledge about both the plant and the wider world that is communicable to humans on a conscious level. Pollan describes the relationship between plants and humans, and how *Cannabis indica* "uses" us for its own survival and evolution as much as we use the plant. The idea that hallucinations can be a source of real information and can communicate like human beings is not endorsed in conventional scientific circles, to say the least. Outside of indigenous cultures that use hallucinogenic plants and subcultures in western societies influenced through the use of LSD and other psychedelics, the conclusions drawn by these cultures are rejected. However, communication from plant to human remains an open question. As Narby writes, "The enigma of hallucinatory knowledge could be reduced to one question: Was this information coming from inside the human brain, as the scientific point of view would have it, or from the outside world of plants, as shamans claim?"

From a homeopathic point of view, the answer would be that the information derives from both sources, but primarily the latter. We are exploring the consciousness of nature when doing a proving, each substance having a unique identity and message. However, all human beings participating in a proving also connect to the substance on the level of their own susceptibilities, reflecting something inherent in each of them. Narby came to a similar conclusion.

The main thrust of Narby's book is that ingesting hallucinogens such as Ayahuasca actually connects a person to the DNA level of reality. All living things share a similar DNA pattern, the difference between a cockroach and a human being much less than we would like to think. Therefore, on a DNA level, ALL living things are connected. As Narby says, "the molecule of life is the same for all species and the genetic information in a rose, a bacterium, or a human being is coded in a universal language of four letters, A, G, C and T, which are

four chemical compounds contained in a DNA double helix.” Consequently, the knowledge is within us and merely has to be accessed. Taking hallucinogenic drugs or doing homeopathic provings is a way to communicate through DNA patterns. Narby conceptually connects the images of snakes, serpents and other reptiles that are often experienced by ingesting Ayahuasca to the structure of DNA molecules and the double helix formation. His exploration showed that different tribes and cultures shared similar experiences in using Ayahuasca, and the cosmologies seen were connected to their experience with the substance. Narby concluded that the connections were not coincidental but part of a more universal experience. In pre-Christian times, serpents symbolized creation and creator gods, a symbolism common to many cultures throughout the world. Narby comments:

the visible snake appears as merely the brief incarnation of a Great Invisible Serpent, which is causal and timeless, a master of the vital principle and of all the forces of nature. It is a primary old god found at the beginning of all cosmogonies, before monotheism and reason toppled it.

However, in both ancient Greek and later Christian times the serpent came to represent evil, with Yahweh defeating the serpent of the cosmic sea, Leviathan. To illustrate the significance of this symbolic change in the image of the serpent Narby quotes Joseph Campbell: “Yahweh accuses the serpent of having shown Eve the tree that allows one to tell the difference between good and evil; how can one apply the Ten Commandments without an understanding of this difference?”

This concept of good and evil is central to Judeo-Christian thinking as well as Islam, representing itself in contrasting images of dark and light and in psychological terms of the conscious and unconscious processes, the id and the ego. Interestingly, in homeopathy the remedies from the Solanaceae family most clearly reflect this polarity, apart from the snake remedies, expressed in language of being divided, split, a fear of the unknown – dark, demons, ghosts, violence, suppression seeking a form of conscious expression.

This polarity of good and evil can be seen in this proving of *Nicotiana rustica*. The original proving and toxicology of *Tabacum* revealed less of this polarity than did provings of other Solanaceae, especially *Stramonium* and *Belladonna*. This split can be traced back over 2,500 years, having been consolidated into Christian doctrine over the ages. It can therefore be seen that the action of Solanaceae remedies is to bring together these two parts, to shine light onto darkness and vice versa, to accept both sides of the equation.

Another thread in this reasoning develops by exploring what homeopathic provings actually do. By experiencing the consciousness of a plant, mineral or animal, humans also experience the revelation that we are not the center of the world in which we live. The illusion of the centrality of human experience in the world is discussed in a fascinating way in John Gray's book *Straw Dogs*. In doing a proving, this illusion begins to crumble, and the assumption (put forth by the

ancient Greeks and hallowed by Judeo-Christian doctrine) that humans represent the highest flowering of evolutionary consciousness comes to look increasingly fallacious. We are but one part of the web of consciousness of the planet. All things can be said to have a soul, even non-living forms. A homeopathic proving is merely a way to connect to this level of consciousness. Provings are therefore one way of experiencing the reality of the universe beyond the immediate human one, whilst signifying our connection to it.