

# Eucalyptus rubida

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## Sustainable Spirituality

We hear a lot about sustainable development goals, sustainable living, and sustainability generally. Since 'Integral Spirituality' has already been coined by Ken Wilber, I thought I would name this article Sustainable Spirituality.

The time is coming and is already here for many individuals, where personal integrity begins to outweigh blind adherence to a prior-held worldview. The world is changing so fast and its intricacies and inner secrets are becoming so more and more transparent that the allurements of a new and more comprehensive perception of sacredness is rising like a bright sun for many.

The feeling is like scales falling from one's eyes, and a feeling of liberation arises in the heart. People tell me that their experience of encountering Teilhard de Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man* (now republished as *The Human Phenomenon*) in the '60s, was such an occasion. The notion that evolution could be expressed with such reverence, and that consciousness could be seen as an emergent quality in evolutionary history really shook the believing community.

A little later on Teilhard's story of human origin and the rise of consciousness was followed by Matthew Fox's publication of *Original Blessing*. In many ways this was a logical follow-on from *The Phenomenon*, in that the likelihood of an 'original sin' was quickly receding, and the paradigm of blessing was so quickly embraced.

After these two events, there was some impatience, in that the teaching church was slow to accept most of this, rather, there was a fairly comprehensive condemnation of them, vestiges of which still linger in some circles. One of the unforeseen results of this was to accelerate the drive for many to search out for themselves a new and more authentic spirituality. This was also roundly condemned, only driving the movement more quickly for people to authenticate for themselves the path to a new spirituality.

The appearance of Joseph Campbell with his historic series on *Mythology* in the late

80's provided for another generation, a deeper education on ancient wisdoms and myths of many other religions. To a generation generally illiterate in mythology, this very compassionately presented series gave a deeper insight into our own mythology.

In his lectures and in his writings (e.g. *Trick or Treat*) Joseph Campbell borrowed the metaphors of Nietzsche when he spoke first of the need to kill the dragon whose name is *Thou Shalt*, and then to become like a child whom he describes as a '*Wheel rolling out of its own Centre.*'

This was quickly followed by the early works of Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme, in their epic telling of *The Uni-*



verse Story. By now the thirst for a deeper story with the potential for real meaning for life was widely evident. Throughout the 90's and the first decade of the new millennium, Berry and Swimme nourished many with their works, and the tradition continues to this day.

The cumulative effect of much of all these wisdoms was to provide a larger stage on which to make meaning of our ever-changing times and its players. There is a sense of urgency in the air: the need to save the planet and its species, the desire to live authentically in a world of expanded values, in short to experience life in all its beautiful potential.

So what can be said about spirituality, and also the qualification I have put on it about 'sustainable'? I have always been ambivalent about the word 'spirituality' and not inclined to want to define it.

My recent reading of Sri Aurobindo's

*The Life Divine* has provided for me an insight into the word, at least that which flows from Vedantic wisdom. Aurobindo's interpretation of how evolutionary emergence works devolves around the notion of the 'involution' of Spirit. He explains that involution is in a sense the opposite of evolution, as interpreted by Teilhard de Chardin. Whereas Teilhard's thinking is around the gradual rise of consciousness, the emphasis in Aurobindo's thinking is a ground-up manifestation of spirit which initiates and sustains all life. Hence the opportunity of an interesting interesting insight into spirituality.

In our Western mode of expression which is quite dualistic we speak of God dwelling 'in the innermost recesses of our hearts' (*Gaudium et Spes*).

In my interpretation of the Eastern thinking, the indwelling of God (Atman, Brahman) is constitutive of our very being from the start of creation. This is very non-dualistic and provided a balance for our relationship to God/Spirit.

*Man's urge towards Spirituality is the inner driving of the spirit within him towards emergence,*

*..a perfection of the whole nature in a dynamic, kinetic spirituality, objectivised in the life, embracing the world,..*

It seems that this wisdom does not recommend an introspective spirituality, but one 'objectivised in the life, embracing the world'. It is as though it is spirit within us that ultimately provides the drive towards emergence with all its implications. And this is true of the whole created order. This would be true therefore for the Glenburn fungus (*tapinella*) pictured.

Pope Francis told us to make the agenda of the world our agenda also, so maybe a sustainable spirituality is a 'kinetic spirituality objectivised in life'. On page 2 of this Newsletter cast your eyes over the Global Goals for Sustainable Development. There is a fair bit of agenda there.

Trevor Parton

Both quotes from *The Life Divine*