

Sacred Groves

Creation

In the beginning the tree of life emerged as a tiny seedling.

Soon, it branched out into everything we call living: microbes, fungi, plants, animals and humans.

We evolved with trees.

Perhaps they lowered our primate ancestors down from their bows and nudged us toward to savanna.

But trees never left us; they continued to provide us with food, fodder, shelter, tools, medicine, and stories.

They began to appear in our dreams.

They began to populate our stories.

It was here, in a forest, that Yahweh planted a garden of trees, pleasing to the eye and good for food (Genesis 2:8-9).

It was here that Zoroaster in Persia saw the Saena tree in a vision emerging from the primeval sea, a tree from whose seeds all other plants grew.ⁱ

It was here that Inanna Goddess of Babylon nourished the Huluppu tree on the banks of the Euphrates River.ⁱⁱ

It was here that Kaang, Creator God of the Batswana Bushmen, created the first mighty tree; which led the first animals and people out from the underworld through its roots and branches.ⁱⁱⁱ

It was here that the Sacred Tree gave light to the Iroquois's island in the sky, before the sun was made, and before the earth was formed on the back of a great turtle.^{iv}

It was here that the Mayan tree of life lifted the sky out from the primordial sea, surrounded by four more trees that held the sky in place and marked the cardinal directions.^v

First Visions

It was here, in a forest that the first whispers of the divine spoke to the human consciousness.

It was here that Abraham wrestled with angels and beheld visions of Yahweh.

It was here that Hindu seekers learned the wisdom of Gurus.

It was here that Siddhartha Gotama became the Buddha, seated beneath the Bodhi tree.

It was here that Moses fasted, prayed and received God's Law.

It was here that Muhammad sought refuge in mountain caves and spoke the words of the holy Koran.

It was here that the Sikh Guru Nanak experienced the One True God.

It was here that Nephi of the Book of Mormon communed with angels and beheld the glorious fruit of the tree of life.

And it was here that John Muir rambled in ecstasy for days.

First temples

It was here, in a forest like this that we built our first temples and worshipped God without priesthoods or recommends.

It was here that Asherah; Canaanite Goddess of all living things was first worshipped.

It was here that Isis of Egypt was worshipped as the mighty Sycamore on the banks of the Nile.

It was here that the Druids passed on their knowledge, worshipped the gods and sacrificed human flesh.

It was also here, in the forest, that after civilization blossomed, that we looked for inspiration. Temples of stone with their pillars, columns, and cathedral arches all resembled the trunks of trees, carrying the eye upward to God. But these temples of stone limited God to one place, one people, one faith.

Fall

It also was here that Adam and Eve fell.

It was here that civilization expanded.

It was here that we logged, burned, mined, clear-cut, developed.

It was here that the old stories were forgotten and we wrote new ones; stories in which creation was no longer sacred, enchanted, animate, or subjective.

Return

In an age of climate change, extinction and corporate tyranny; *it is here*, to the forest that we must return.

Not only as skiers, hikers, campers, birders, hunters, and foresters, but as devotees.

Because it is here that we see the universe in microcosm; where we get our bearings.

It is here that creation awes.

It is here that we experience the divine.

It is here that we can bring our questions.

It is here that we can experience mystical solitude.

It is here that we are now.

Meditation

Focus on FEELING (sensing) the sun, wind, and earth beneath your toes as a tree might.

If you wish, stretch your arms up and out like branches seeking the light.

Imagine drinking in the sun as food...

Now focus on your breath.

Let the air pass through your nostrils and fill your lungs.

Feel your lungs slowly deflate as your body expels carbon dioxide.

Focus on the entire process of breathing and how each moment changes.

In... Out...

Imagine the oxygen produced in the leaves of these very trees gently pushed from the leaf, wafting through this space and entering our lungs.

In... Out...

As you breathe out, imagine the CO₂ wafting in the air and entering the stomata of the leaves, powering the cycle of photosynthesis.

In... Out...

The air becomes us, becomes them.

It is a sacrament...We take it upon us, into us and they themselves.

As the trees breathe out, we breathe in.

We are their lungs and they are ours.

In... Out...

This is not a supernatural idea, it is an ecological reality.

Dwell in this reality...

ⁱ (<http://www.mythome.org/creatmid.html>)

ⁱⁱ (<http://www.piney.com/BabHulTree.html>)

ⁱⁱⁱ (http://www.cs.williams.edu/~lindsey/myths/myths_14.html)

^{iv} (http://www.cs.williams.edu/~lindsey/myths/myths_12.html)

^v (http://www.authenticmaya.com/maya_cosmology.htm)