

SERPENT, EARTH, HEALING, INITIATION

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Introduction

The worship of serpents evokes older ways of revering earth energies that can be found in mythological and cosmological systems of many ancient cultures. In South Asia, ancient Hindu and Buddhist texts depict the complex and shifting position of serpent deities as the Vedic culture began to spread into, incorporate, appropriate and/or demonize presences and motifs found in pre-Vedic and non-Vedic cultures.

In 2016, serpents slipped into my life of their own accord. An encounter with Nagadevi drew me irresistibly toward nagas and sacralized or deified serpents in other civilizations. Through this engagement, I have come to see that reconnecting with and decolonizing the earth/snake energies is one way in which the borderlands feminine can heal her pasts, presents and futures.

Serpent Tongue

*Her startled black tongue, enigma
I entered the cave large as her tongue
Red dripping from her doorway
She who is of passion & might combined
Arose from her red-waisted leisure
They all fled
What was left was my tongue's desire to call out her name
Parrots whispered secrets to each other
Like lovers, their heads bent to each other
I chose to be bold & speak
The secrets
Of silence*

Nagadevi's Call

When I encountered Nagadevi in 2016 in Bangalore in a small temple inside the perimeter of the residential complex where my family lives, she captivated me. I wanted to know who she was. It was a deep, instinctual calling. I felt directed to go to Mannarsala in Kerala, which has a serpent temple.

The Mannarsala temple is presided over by Nagaraja—king of serpents. Also in the temple complex are shrines for Nagaraja's two consorts, Sarpayakshi and Nagayakshi. The temple had an additional draw for me: it is rare in that even though it is maintained by a Brahmin lineage, its chief priestess heading the rituals is a woman.

At Nagadevi's small temple, I had felt an invitation—and spaciousness—to freely embody my own priestess self, without being weighed down by extrinsic rules or any fear of judgment. I could appear before her in the fullness of my intuition: I could receive her from that same fullness. Often, she would be a living presence to me, granting me direct experiencing and esoteric knowledge. No intermediaries—no male priests—were needed between us. My call was sufficient to bring her into living, faintly vibrating, presence. In meditations with her, for the first time I began experiencing living archetypal energies at the root of deities in the ancient Hindu pantheon. I journeyed to the cosmological time of their forming that antedated the appropriation of these energies by a repressive patriarchal Brahmanical order.

At Mannarsala, on the other hand, I ran into the androcentric Brahmanic culture and administration. Brahmin men were everywhere on the temple grounds, managing the flow of visitors, conducting rituals, carrying out the multifarious responsibilities of an active house of worship in India. It appeared to my outsider eye that the movements of the head priestess (Amma) herself were directed and regulated by male Brahmins. This was not a woman's world. Its standards and norms were determined and enforced by Brahmin men. As a woman who has grown up in a man's world, I know when I am in a context when men walk with the sureness of privilege, and women are given eggshells to walk on. In this temple, it was clear that men were the custodians, even if Amma herself is named as the chief priestess. I had received spirit guidance for a personal ritual I needed to do at the temple. In the milieu I found

myself in, I felt furtive as I did the ritual one sleepy afternoon, lest one of the temple men see me.

Within a patriarchal and hierarchical Brahmanical order, I often experience double disability as a woman and as a non-Brahmin. There is minimal room for me to have unfiltered, unmediated access to the sacred, or to my own sacred self. Hindu patriarchies have sought to regulate and impose external and internal conditions under which I may relate to the sacred. They have shamed and derogated the parts of me that expand upon coming in contact with sacred mysteries.

With Nagadevi, I had the sense that she began to know me as much as I began to know her. That at her shrine, I could have a direct relationship with Nagadevi was partly my will; partly, it may have been hers. There was tremendous healing in this.

Yet, at the Mannarsala temple, the patriarchal androcentric Brahmanical culture perpetuated gender and caste hierarchies, and belied the emancipatory promise held out to me by virtue of its retaining a woman as spiritual head. The dominance of the Brahmin male was left undisturbed at this serpent temple.

Upon encountering the legend of the founding of the temple, I experienced a further cognitive dissonance at the absence of the feminine. Neither Sarpayakshi nor Nagayakshi play a role of any significance in the temple legends that are told today among Mannarsala's Namboodiri Brahmins.¹ I felt betrayed by yet another narration assuming "the 'common-sense' character of patriarchal reality."² My own sense was that the narrative lacunae surrounding Sarpayakshi and Nagayakshi could be associated with the discourse of Brahminical patriarchy in which the feminine is marginalized or subordinated.

Despite everything, the fact remained that in going to Mannarsala, I had let myself trust an impulse my rational mind did not fully understand. Appropriately enough, Dianne Jenett calls this process of trusting the chthonic, "following the snake."³ This itself constituted a moment of transformation—an interstitial moment, when I transcended my fistful of knowns and summoned my voice, vitality and authority into serpent movement.⁴ As Anzaldúa puts it, "La mestiza has gone from being the sacrificial goat to becoming the officiating priestess at the crossroads."⁵

Serpent

*Which coiled rope will you pick up
 &
 unravel?
 Whose syllable seeded itself into your mouth &
 washed incoming sounds
 with breath of oneness?
 Is there a story?
 That vanished under earth
 Was swallowed by earth
 A burning maze spins under surface
 Spinning fire under surface gathers momentum
 waiting to emerge at an eligible moment
 We who live under belly of time often wondered
 how cosmos would turn out
 Womb-tree of mother grew
 Time in its anxiety buzzing around above our heads
 White tail shedding fear
 We learnt to dive into mother's ocean whenever time came near
 We offered ourselves to mother, whole
 Beloved's eyes are creased with age
 She is all ages at once
 O fragrant one
 I begin lifting fibrils of her skin one at a time and lick
 My tongue swells with the need to tell a story
 Bodies begin dancing above my head
 In the beginning
 There was one clan, not two
 Bird that broke free from belly of snake
 Snake that wiggled its way out of bird's beak
 Keepers, both
 of ancient waters of life
 Every struggle later, blood & skin collected under their fingernails
 To recover, I go into past
 where I'd forgotten my bags & trunks*

*Three silver-haired women are waiting with my baggage
 Salt in their hair gleams with something beyond wisdom
 I lick the salt & remember
 She whose sharp-jutted call lived among trees
 She whose cheeks wind scratched from too long a proximity
 I wore her skin painted around my waist
 I singed to her feathers, slowly
 I wriggled down tree of life and curled around its trunk
 in sinuous mass, not much but sinecure
 This long sleep woke up giants
 This sleep rumbled under earth and crept into cracks
 I lifted strands of time one after the other, looking for my
 parts
 Timeline in which I was change
 I spanned seven oceans, seven worlds, with each step
 Something moved under my dream
 In dream-bed, I cavorted, one amongst a million snakes
 Millennia we spun swiftly off into a horizon
 finding newness of possibility
 Flinging ourselves into infinity, riding waves, we met
 ourselves
 They spoke from behind the sun
 (Sun was a distant relative who sometimes crossed sky to meet them)
 Animal that came down from stars looked nothing like you or me
 Its tail was close to the ground
 They spoke
 They vanished then, crawled into different dimensions of cosmos
 She who was sovereign unto herself
 split into two
 They placed half of her skin in a museum & called it temple
 Deep white land of sleep is oblivious to anything happening
 White sleep of oblivion that stretches into your eyes
 You have to get through trees to find & bring back what got lost there
 It is appropriate
 Jewel that lives in the belly of snake is nothing but life
 Life matters*

A New Vision

Patriarchy deems certain figures as marginal or less relevant, perhaps even ostracizes them. Yet, we might still experience an instinctive, insistent pull toward them, even deeper than the ocean. We can give these energies a respectable garb, and even put on a sari around them (e.g., see Nagadevi's image in Fig. 19). The fact remains that they come from a part of us/the world that is wild and untamable.



Fig. 19. Nagadevi. Drawing by Rita Hillman, 2019.

It is not necessary here that I make a cognitive-intellectual accounting of serpents—or explicate upon their mythic, historical and cultural significance in South Asia or elsewhere—to avow my draw towards them. In Mannarsala, Brahmin male priests have grabbed control of the wild, primordial energy of serpents by subjugating the sacred relationships through which—I am intuiting—the priestesses of old tended serpent energies. At least, this has been attempted. Priestesses' access to the borderlands itself is controlled and patrolled by the patriarchal authority.

Yet, primordial energies—and those who are conduits for them—are never entirely tamable. Surely, embers lie asleep in the folds of the earth where the ancients are born as energies. It takes but a wind to spark an ember into fire. With its vast distribution of microconsciousnesses, India is yet poised to birth a new vision for the future.

Snake, Woman

Secret terrain where oneness resides

one-seeing

Snake looks at woman

It is not distance

Terroir of oneness

through which they move together

snake, woman

Energies folding out of me

Energies folding out of you

Inner the mystery:

Enter

What comes across like rivers undammed

arose through thrill of tale

In deep time, they live still

as one

The Serpent Movement

Subsequent to my visit to Mannarsala, I have had other encounters with serpent deities as well as with living serpents. Snakes are not merely symbols or mythic-sacral constructs: they are our co-dwellers in an ecological real. The animistic expression of the Nagas depends on their co-evolving

on this Earth in their form as animals. As beings of nature, they need a biosphere in which to thrive.

I have found that one answer for the healing of post-patriarchal possibilities for the body, intimacy, and futurities in the remantling of serpent energies.

Many of us have found ourselves activated into both hope and trauma by the repeated evidencing of patriarchy's utter disregard for the well-being of women. In the face of this experience, one of the questions I have found myself asking is this: How may we make ourselves more available to an imagination that orients us better to becoming denizens of dawning post-patriarchal moments?

Patriarchy does not exist singly. The social system of exclusion is constructed as a set of interlocking structures of oppression, domination and subjugation: kyriarchy as a system is multiplicative.⁶

Centuries of living within social systems of domination has left our bodies, nervous systems, and wills with accumulated trauma that, we have found, acts as a limitation upon—or wars upon—the arc of the possible. It wars upon our promise to ourselves, and our promise to each other. This trauma must not only be discharged to make us more available to ourselves, our promise and each other: it must be transformed in a way that the energy released contributes to the liberation of all life. It is my hypothesis that the medicine of serpents holds one key for our safer embodied being, relationships and resilience.

In *Borderlands*,⁷ Gloria Anzaldúa uses the term “spiritual mestizaje” to describe the ways in which spirituality informs every aspect of the work of evolution—and revolution—entailed in bringing two cultures together. Giving rise to new subjectivities, epistemologies and healing from the ashes of the old—transforming the old—asks from us a critical mobility—the ability to live *as* “the opus, the great alchemical work.”⁸ Then, Anzaldúa writes, “We have become the quickening serpent movement.”⁹

To birth the possibilities that will come together from the clash of patriarchy and what will arise from the healing of it, we invoke within ourselves the serpent—a process that continually allows us to shed old identities, agreements and codes, a process that allows us to renew ourselves into wholeness. We get to know the serpent, and come into relation with it.

Naga Gnosis

Shortly after Christine Blasey's testimony and the eruption of the #MeToo in India, one afternoon I made offerings at a eucalyptus tree in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, and asked to make contact with the ancient tree in the temple compound of Mannarsala. I asked the Nagas what they had to say about the traumas ensuing in the collective from the somatic and lived experience of being in patriarchy. I asked them about the healing of the feminine and the masculine. This is the serpent gnosis I received as I sat with my back against the tree.

A caveat is to remember that serpents—whether we know them as ecological beings or through ritual texts, traditions and myths—by their very nature resist both control and exclusivity of narrative as well as interpretation. Any gnosis, revelation or knowing that arises through our relationship as humans to their realms must of necessity allow for a multitude of layers.

The phenomenon of serpents is sensed within our own somatic awareness, first of all, through how differently they move. They undulate.

Serpent reminds us, even if part of us wants to stay stagnant, that the only way out is moving through it. Serpents are sacred because they embody the movement of living life. The movement of the serpent is against perfection.

Within our bodies, the nervous system is a counterpart of the serpent. The nervous system cannot be controlled. It will have its own reactions. In that way, its responses are primitive—they are reptilian.

The response of the nervous system comes from the deep core of our being. It is that pure. This means that we can chart our journeys to sovereignty through the divining rod of our nervous systems. Bringing awareness to the subtle responses in our nervous systems allows us to begin to see the patterns we hold within. It allows us to see the whole of our relationship with coherence and flow.



Relationships are what have been affected in societies of domination. This started out with that cutting out of that first, most central of relationships: with the Mother.

The mother is also an aspect of ourselves. By disallowing this relationship in its fullness—and the consistent experience of nurture, seeing, knowing, allowing and attunement with the mother—we were rendered insecure. The deep attachment traumas many of us carry within us come from within this source wound.

They diminish our autonomy. They diminish our ability to trust ourselves. They render us easily porous to the energies that want us to experience scarcity. They make us more preoccupied with being safe, and less willing to take risks. They keep us loyal to the old paradigm, and less willing to transform it.

By making our relationship to ourselves unsafe, it is our ability to respond to the collective crisis—and our will to participate in creating alternatives to oppressive systems—that patriarchy diminishes.



In patriarchy, many priestesses and priests of ancient serpent traditions also lost their autonomy. Many of us have experienced the pain of being born amidst traditions that are merely distorted refractions of the primordial truths they were born to witness.



With the pervasive experience of disconnection and alienation, not only do we feel unsafe, but our very bodies have developed a defensive physiology.

The spine is an alive band of circuitry. Spinal practitioners tell us that our spine shows what kind of pressures we have had in life. All unintegrated emotional traumas leave an energetic and structural imprint on it. The spine shows what our experiences have shaped us into. It carries the traces of our individual, collective, cultural and ancestral memories.

The shape and alignment of the spine determines the clarity and creativity with which our nervous system functions.

The stress that we live amidst gets stored within our bodies, spine, and nervous system—the stress within our spine and our nervous system speaks to our disconnection from the serpent energies.



By invoking the serpent, we are invoking our capacity to be in sovereign connection with the Earth, with ourselves and with our will.

From ancient sources in diverse cultures, we have learned about the different ways in which we may come into contact with serpent energies. In many traditions, dance is one way in which people come into contact with them. These energies are sinuous; they are wave-like. They are not stiff or static. Serpents do not move in blocks or chunks of energy, but in waves. Theirs is a fluid energy. They embody the fluidity that makes up *being*—not just our own, but ours-beyond-duality.

There is a reason the serpent has a strong connection to water in ancient lore, why the Nagas are said to “haunt lakes, ponds and the sources of rivers, [be] beneficial

givers of rain”¹⁰; why they are said to be guardians of the waters. Theirs were the first bodies that could survive in the watery realms of creation.

And, even more: the movement of the serpent evokes the living vital fluidity of the Earth.

We remantle serpent energies, then, by changing the liquid energetic core within ourselves. To become intimate with the serpent, we need to lose our fear of the deep electric within. We need to figure out how to sit with the serpent when the serpent is in front of us, looking at us. This encounter must be approached through non-rational faculties, in ways that go animal—beyond the rational. It must be approached at a level more-than-human, at the level of instinct.

We must regain our instincts—our trust in our perceptions, our discernment and our bodies.



The serpent is very much an other. I do know this, as someone who has danced with serpents in ceremony, and remembered being an oracle with them in another time.

When I’ve danced with serpents, I’ve felt an at-oneness with them.

If the serpent is also within us—as our spine, connected to our nervous system—we can only imagine with what tenderness we need to tend this other.

Can you imagine a traumatized serpent within you? A serpent that has lost its instinct to know when to strike, when to retreat? A serpent that responds in fight or flight or freeze patterns because it is stuck in those traumatic patterns?

When snakes in mythology are spoken of as malevolent, they are not being seen through the lenses of an animal that is frightened or hurt—an animal whose instinct has been messed with—but are ascribed intentionality that is “evil.” It is possible that these mythic serpents had not been stripped of goodness—rather, on them were foisted qualities that are human. It is possible that speaking of serpents as evil comes from a loss of discrimination and sight that is part of the narrative of patriarchy.

This is different than recuperating the frightened, angry serpent asking to be soothed.

The serpent’s connection to caves and darkness indicates the capacity to be with our fears. This is not fearlessness, but a kind of courage that is more: it is a recognition of the fears and the darkness itself as one that is deeply of the Self, something that allows you to find treasures by letting you momentarily close your ego-eye and shut out the ego-light.

These are all things that have been demonized: serpent, darkness, water, instinct, intuition, the feminine. They were demonized because they are outside the realm of control and rationality—they frighten patriarchy and colonialism. The serpent will just not be put into a grid—neither will darkness, water, instinct, intuition, the feminine. Their inner movement—inner technology—grants them the grace and capacity of subversion. Each of these energies—by the very way in which they can move—can surpass the grids of reality and create new zones and habitats of possibility.

The serpent comes out of the darkness. It is inextricably of the underworld, showing us how mysterious and inseparable the relationship between the void and light is.

Are we willing to sit with the chthonic, to let the chthonic come to us? To dwell in the Serpent is to give up our

innocence. It is to give up the belief that it is possible to go back to what was, and to let ourselves be bathed by the deepest innocence that comes from Source.



Trauma is the response that gets stuck in the body until we can repair what is torn. The good thing about trauma is that it points to where and how we are disconnected in our energetic system.

Attachment patterns are one way in which this disconnection in our energetic system shows up. Are we living in reality, or are we living in fantasy? If there is a disconnection in the energetic system, it is very hard for the brain to give up even an illusion of attachment. Attachment is the bloom that sustains our yearning for the divine—our capacity to connect with the divine—the deep affect the divine generates in this human realm when it arrives here to play.

How our attachment patterns are replaying can be a good test for trauma, then. If what our instincts are taking us toward feels good, life-giving and life-enhancing, then we know we have reclaimed our sovereignty. If we find ourselves moving within patterns that keep us in a loop, instead of in a motion of liberation, then we know there is a call to change the way in which we move. This is a call for us to see the trauma, and to bring it liberation and more connection.

Trauma is not a block, but a reaction. It perverts our tendencies to *relax* into the moment, to be present in the moment, to see another person, to witness someone from a place of compassion, to not create stories about them.

But our bodies arrived into this world with all the codes necessary for us to thrive. This means that we can invoke

and call in our healing. We can invoke and call in the serpent to assist with that healing.

To remantle the serpent is to see them as our partners, not as objects. To invite the serpent in is not about adding them to our collections.

Mythology, lore and history point to the deep significance of serpent worship; they have something real to say to us about how nature wants us to move—not just our bodies, but our minds, souls and spirits.

Everything we have learned about consciousness, spirit, nature and our place in nature will be found by us in nature. We are of nature, we are not outside it.

In nature, then, these are the places I would tell you to go to, to connect with and honor the serpents: caves, waters, trees. I would tell you to dance. I would tell you to shed the veil of the rational and to slither on the edge that you can barely see with your rational mind, so that you may, from that vantage, call forth viable alternatives to the oh-so-rational reality that strangles what is most vital to us.

The serpent speaks to what has been persecuted: a kind of vital energy, a vital pulse. We need this today. That it has been persecuted does not mean it is not here for us to call forth, bring forth and re-member within ourselves.

The work is not something the serpents can do by themselves either. It has to be done by them in partnership, with humans.

Another deep practice would be to connect with and heal our pelvic region. The pelvic floor is the cave of the mother. Recuperating the spiraling threads of our stories, voices and motherlines is no further than the serpent that rises from our own sacral energies—the root of our creativity.

Remembering as Initiation

Remembering helps us endure. Remembering is an initiation too. Le'ema Kathleen Graham tells a beautiful story of how the serpent came through her as she danced after her own snakebite initiation.¹¹ She writes, about ancient priestesses: "What the serpent chose to teach, the priestess learned to offer to others."¹² Being initiated by serpents come with its own responsibility to dance the full dance. It comes with the responsibility to change the movements of energy and earth in our own lives, and to share our lives with others.

Neuroscience Research and Remembering

What we remember changes the pasts, the present and the futures available to us. This has now been corroborated by neuroscience research. According to interpersonal neurobiologist Daniel Siegel, "memory is the way past events affect future function."¹³ What is encoded in the brain as memory—our experience of the world—constructs the future we anticipate.

From the work of Siegel and other neuroscientists, it appears that the memory that gets stored (as what is called an "engram") changes when it is retrieved.¹⁴ Conceptualizing the engram not as static, unchanging content stored in the brain, but as an interconnected—and therefore malleable—patterning of energy flow and information, changes the picture of how we understand the pasts and futures. Honoring the serpent energy of memory allows us to use memory as a resource for the liberation of our experience in the present, in our pasts and in anticipated futures.

Neuronal activity is responsive—and the set of neurons that gets activated and fires in particular patterns (called "neural net profiles"), are never identical with profiles activated in the past, though they may resemble them.¹⁵ Siegel writes, "remembering is not merely the reactivation of an old engram; it is the construction of a new neural net profile with features of the old engram and elements of memory from older experiences, as well as influences from the present state of mind."¹⁶ To me, this suggests that we can change memory itself by what and how we remember. Remembering itself can become a way to trigger a different enough neural net profile that will change the possibilities for the future encoded in the nervous system.

As feminists at the borderlands, we can use this serpentine quality of memory to recover our motherlines. We can connect more deeply with

our ancestresses, some of whom were perhaps the snake priestesses lost in modernity.

The serpent, remembered, is nothing less than a conceptual-sensual reclaiming of heterogenous temporality. The serpent initiates us into our embodied belonging to Earth. As we traverse our own vast underworlds, we grieve. Wave-like, pushing off of the bumps encountered, we heal and change the future(s) available to us. We remember that we are the ones who have come before; we are the ones who are coming.

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Endnotes

- 1 The legends told by the Brahmin family that manages the temple center on Nagaraja's appearance before their forebears. Nagaraja, they say, appeared before a childless couple after the couple had nursed back to health numerous

serpents burned in a forest fire. Nagaraja blessed them and agreed to be born as their son. He has stayed on in the temple cellar, in samadhi, to bless the devotees. See “About the Temple—History,” Mannarasala Sree Nagaraja Temple, 2010.

- 2 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), 53.
- 3 Dianne Elkins Jenett, “Red Rice for Bhagavati/Cooking for Kannaki: An Ethnographic Inquiry of the Pongala Ritual at Attukal Temple, Kerala, South India” (PhD diss., California Institute of Integral Studies, 1999), 53.
- 4 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987), 81.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 80.
- 6 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Method in Women’s Studies in Religion: A Critical Feminist Hermeneutics,” in *Methodology in Religious Studies: The Interface with Women’s Studies*, ed. Arvind Sharma (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 210.
- 7 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 81.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 81.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 J. Ph Vogel, *Indian Serpent-Lore, or, The Nagas in Hindu Legend and Art* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2011), 4.
- 11 Le’ema Kathleen Graham, “Holy Bite,” in *Stepping into Ourselves: An Anthology of Writings on Priestesses*, ed. Anne Key and Candace Kant (Lanham: Goddess Ink, 2015), 273.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 274.
- 13 Daniel Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2012), 46.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 50.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 47–48.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 51.

GODDESS IS ALIVE! BUT HOW DO WE KNOW?

JUDY GRAHN



Many of us have personal relationships with what we in the mainstream women’s spirituality movement might broadly call “the goddess”—but that can also be called by a particular name, and is a creatrix, a spirit, or an ancestor, or is called “Mother” or “Grandmother” or “Sister.” Many of us have experiences we would call paranormal, intuitive, psychic, visionary; some of us have experienced visitations, delivery of information, ecstatic states and/or special relationships with creatures, plants, the wind or other elements of nature.^{1*}

But how do we know when we are in contact? Sometimes the dream *is* a pre-cog dream, sometimes the phone call *is* from the person you were just thinking about; sometimes someone tells you that a dove is following her and the dove really shows up.

Sometimes we romanticize and see synchronicities in everything, which makes us seem silly, even to ourselves.

Science, especially the science of the paranormal, of remote viewing, and so on, has been able to show that human beings have extrasensory perception capacities that have successfully been the subject of double- and triple-blind studies. Some of the research indicates that the time–space continuum bends in such a way that sometimes we can perceive or sense the future. There is nothing inherently “spiritual” about such abilities, scientists have argued; they are simply functions of the human brain that have been untested until now.

However, many of us who live our lives making use of such capacities understand them as non-repeatable, and as relational rather than random and take them as some sort of “message” whether from one’s own psychic