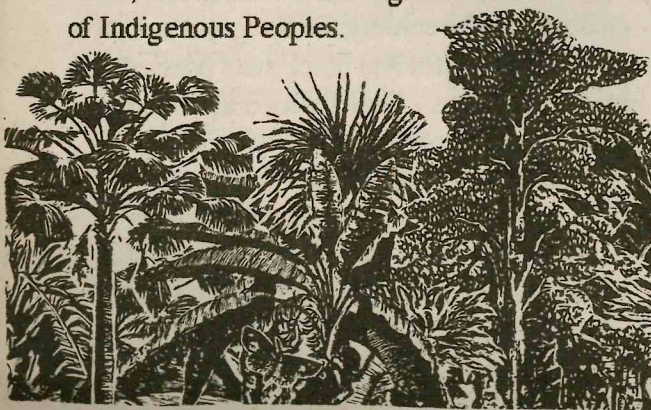


have not been adhered to, and people concerned with rainforest issues have seriously questioned ITTO operations.

As we deflated the chainsaw, the ITTO delegates made their way into the meeting. We could only hope that, amid their microphones, papers and facts and figures they would remember the passionate and heartfelt pleas for the people, plants and animals of the forests.

Meanwhile, "The Voice of the Indigenous Peoples" meeting, subtitled "A Symposium to Reflect upon Japan's Role as a Perpetrator of Human Rights Violations and Environmental Destruction" was being held in Tokyo. Representatives from Nicaragua, Panama, and Papua New Guinea, and Mr. Giichi Nomura (Chairperson of the Hokkaido Ainu Association) made connections between environmental destruction, development and human rights violations. They told stories of overfishing, mining, dam constructions, corrupt governments, dangerous working conditions with all the benefits going to profit-hungry multinational companies. They deplored the imbalance in modern society that allows such destruction, and welcomed the recent formation of the Alliance of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests. They expressed their disgust that representatives from Sarawak, Malaysia had been prevented from attending by the Malaysian authorities. However, they are hoping for increased awareness and understanding in 1993, which has been designated as the Year of Indigenous Peoples.



Children of the Penan

by Caroline Winstone

During my first day in Sarawak I had been surprised to see very young girls using knives, usually for cutting meat or scraping rotan. Although there is plenty of time for play, taking responsibility from a young age is second nature to them. Lina, a girl of about ten years old, had been assigned to look after me. We ate lunch from the same plate, sharing some mashed green marrow-like vegetable prepared by her grandmother and then bananas I'd brought from town which had got squashed in their plastic bag.

A young child sitting just in front of us needed attending to. Lina fetched water and cleaned the child. As she took the child on her lap, it struck me that she was quite likely to be a mother herself within six years.

The children took me down a track to a stream where I could wash myself and my clothes. Water from a stream was channelled in a bamboo pipe propped up with bamboo legs. The end rested on an old oil drum, so that the water could fall from a point high enough for people to wash under it. The children collected water from here in plastic buckets to take back to their houses. Often if I went there alone, I would turn around to find a group of children watching me in silence, presumably interested in what a woman from England looks like when she washes.

On my second day I wanted to go for a walk, needing to stretch my legs, and prepare for some longer walks I intended to make later on. The children were assigned to

accompany me, then at the stream we met Belawan's son-in-law, who decided to come too. We went up a path so narrow it was only just discernable. The children were laughing and I wanted to know why, but our guide was reluctant to tell me. "Something make them laugh" he said. "They think if you are not careful, you might fall down", he said at last. It was a story I'd heard before that the Penan think white people do not know how to walk in the jungle. Sure enough, they seemed to be gliding through the branches as I struggled to get past close-growing saplings. They know the forest so well, and are so sure-footed, that hunting at night - and barefoot at that - is a normal activity.

As we walked the children picked up orange fruits for me to eat. They were so small that most western people wouldn't have bothered with them. They were delicious. When I found some that I thought were the same, they warned me not to eat them. They pointed out the differences between them and the ones that were edible. My powers of observation were no match for theirs. The forest was their school as well as their pantry.

These children had a capacity for concentration and quiet observation beyond that normally seen in western children. I have a vivid memory of Lina sitting with that special patience and acceptance as her grandmother meticulously checked her hair for lice. After a long time, twenty or thirty minutes perhaps, they changed roles. There was a poignancy about the change over as Lina took the role of the adult. The tiny, older woman became as submissive as a child, totally giving herself up to the ministrations of another.

Salary Donation Request

In last month's newsletter we explained why JEE needs at least one salaried office worker and Maura Hurley has agreed to work 20 hours a week for a salary of ¥60,000 a month until June 1993. At a meeting held on November 14 it was decided that the most effective way to guarantee a regular income will be to ask members directly to make a donation, either once a month, or as a lump sum. If you feel you can afford a donation to help JEE function more efficiently, please send us the amount you decide by means of the enclosed *furikomiyoshi* (post office transfer form) through your local post office. JEE's post office account number is Kyoto Furikae 9-16846. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Service in the Western Mystical Tradition

by Richard Evanoff

This article was sent in response to Steve Hoffman's discussion in his Environmental Researcher's Column. It is an extract from an academic paper on the subject.

There is a widespread tendency to think of the Western mystical tradition as "otherworldly" - as more concerned with a heavenly world beyond matter than with the sometimes hellish problems of "this world". The Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus (205-270), however, who influenced much subse-

quent mystical thinking in the West, attempted to reconcile the otherworldly and the this-worldly by positing that the world of everyday experience is infused with a divine presence. Everything that exists is a spark of one divine soul. The divine does not exist apart from nature, but within it. The earth itself is a god, a "single living being", interconnected in all its parts. Moreover, to the extent that humanity is able to experience itself not as an isolated fragment but as part of this organic whole, it too is "divine". Rather than regard the divine as majestic, omnipotent "God" above and beyond the world, Plotinus believed that the divine is at the center of everything that exists. And if God is at the center of everything that exists, then God is also at the center of each tree, river, and mountain, as well as each individual person. Plotinus believed that humans can come to a realization of this divine presence through silent contemplation. By stripping away the film of our selfish thoughts and desires, the divine light is able to shine forth from inside us. Enlightenment is not something bestowed on us from the outside, but rather the realization of something that is already within us. The way to know God, as later mystics would contend, is to know one's own self.

Mainstream Christianity has historically emphasized the transcendence of the divine more than its immanence, and typically substituted creeds, rituals, and ecclesiastical authority for direct inner spiritual experience. By conceiving God as a majestic King it was easy for the feudal Church to reinforce the hierarchical structure of both sacred and secular society, symbolized by Pope and Emperor. Running counter to the religious mainstream, however, was a mystical crosscurrent which emphasized the immanence of God within the self and within nature. The roots of this mysticism are in fact

quite orthodox. It was Athanasius - champion of the Nicene Creed adopted at the first ecumenical council convened in 325 A.D. by the Emperor Constantine - who wrote: "God became human that humans might become God." For Athanasius, the incarnation of Christ represented the perfect fusion of the divine and the human. Instead of being an object of devotion, Christ is seen as the archetype of what it is possible for all human beings to experience. Rather than put Christ up on a pedestal and worship him as some kind of "hero" (as is frequently the case today), we ourselves are invited to become sons and daughters of God.

The distinctive features of Eastern Orthodox mysticism have remained (and still remain) largely unknown in the West, where Augustinian theology, with its emphasis on the omnipotence of God and the total depravity of humankind, is dominant. Nonetheless, there was a flowering of mysticism in medieval Europe which produced communal, and sometimes radical, lay movements. Mysticism was frequently suppressed by the Inquisition, however, because it was - quite correctly - perceived as a threat to traditional religious authority. If the divine is immediate (inside) to the individual (regardless of social rank or gender), it is no longer necessary for the Church to mediate between the individual and God. Hierarchy is eliminated in favour of genuine spiritual community.

The Reformation liberated religious life from ecclesiastical authority but the results were not entirely favourable to mysticism. Rather than eliminate authoritarianism altogether in favour of the direct leading to the spirit, Protestantism tended to simply substitute the authority of the Bible for the authority of the Church. Moreover, Luther and Calvin brought the Augustinian theologi-

cal tradition with them into Protestantism, emphasizing the transcendence rather than the immanence of God and the total depravity of human beings rather than their potential divinization. Although there were a few prominent Protestant mystics, mysticism was by and large rejected by Protestants as an "unhealthy" vestige of Catholicism.

It has only been recently that some Christians, noticing the spiritual aridity of much that passes for contemporary "Christianity", have begun to recover their mystical heritage. Similarities between Christian mysticism and mystical tradition found in Buddhism, Sufism, and Hinduism have also been explored. The net result of this revived interest in mysticism is a reawakened sense of a "divine presence" within the self and within nature. Instead of regarding ourselves as alienated, isolated, me-first, grab-whatever-we-can-get egoists, we come instead to see the interconnectedness of ourselves with others and with nature. This contemplative awareness exhibits itself directly through the service we give to others and on behalf of the Earth.

BYE-BYE TO BUY! BUY!

By Maura Hurley

The season of gift-giving is here again. A frenzy of consumerism sweeps Japan as people rush to fulfill their *oseibo* Christmas and New Year gift giving obligations.

Sit awhile, take a deeeep breath, and ask yourself what the tradition of gift-giving means to you. What is it you want to express with your gift? Why do people give gifts? What is one of the best gifts you have ever

received? The origins of gift-giving are deeply rooted: giving something that you have created yourself with love and respect for the recipient.

With the intensified consumerism during the holidays, there is even more of a need to think about the environment. It is still possible to have a meaningful holiday season even if you want to stay away from stores. After all, the department stores don't offer much in the way of originality, unless you enjoy overpackaging, high prices and lots of waste.

So here are some of my original ideas and some from other JEE members and friends that might give you a new outlook on gift-giving and the environment.

Since everyone is so busy these days, invite a friend or relative to spend time with you. Giving your time may be one of the nicest presents of all and the good feelings and memories last forever! Plan a day going to a favorite outdoor place with a friend, make dinner at home together, spend time with your children. To mark the occasion, hand them a homemade card. Alternatively, you could set aside time to make something such as the proverbial hand-knit sweater (but you had better start right away!).

Things to think about when deciding on a present:

What does that person like? What do they need? Asking a person what they really need should not be considered a social faux pas. So ask family members and friends to make a list of some of the things they need.

Does the gift support a good cause? (for example, fair trade group, organic food co-op, Amnesty or UNICEF products or even a JEE eco-quiz calendar)

Will the gift promote an interest in alternative living? (an earth-friendly shampoo, a book, or reusable chopsticks in a pouch!)