

THE GREEN FINGERPRINT:

Exploring a critical signature in the quest
for a renewed and balanced Self

FOREWORD

Since the first circulation of this essay, I have received a variety of feedback/questions. This foreword serves the purpose of hopefully clarifying some of my intentions and objectives.

- The “Green Fingerprint” has not been written by an academic. It is aimed at a wide target audience and therefore should not be considered as a production for any one specific group. It is not intended to be a high-level teaching manual or a polished thesis, but is intended to bring awareness to certain contemporary issues and to ultimately stimulate discussion on a subject that is dear to its author. Perhaps someone who has an affinity for the subject (and is more academically inclined) could address these issues in a grounded thesis.
- At times, the essay explores mythology, metaphor, symbol and archetype. In this regard, any mention of such things as Celestial-Dew, Soma, Elixir, Herb-of-Immortality, Philosopher’s-Stone etc, is to be viewed within the correct context of this essay which sees the organic nature of such terms as being either valuable *living metaphors/symbols* within an ancient and grounded “*vocabulary*” (often utilised in mythology and poetry for conveying a *fertile* sense of “meaning” to an otherwise physical, emotional, social and mental wasteland) or else as being valuable *archetypes* for the channelling of essential processes within the psyche. These organic terms, symbols or archetypes are not intended to be interpreted as a subliminal call for the reader to indulge in the use of Cannabis, or so-called “magic mushrooms”, or any other psychoactive plant/mineral substance. Please carefully consider the author’s presentation of ecology, metaphor, symbol and archetype.
- The essay reflects on the flow of specific spiritual ideas and symbols through various religious, cultural and mystical groups, and considers how this relates to the *green signature* and its root “Green-Man” archetype. It is not intended for the reader to view the author’s actual reflection on this “flow of spiritual ideas/symbols” as being *the* offered framework for awakening to Reality. To mimic this reflection by seeing how many mystical facts one can accumulate during one’s lifetime is construed as “spiritual consumerism”, which is the *endless* pursuit of occult secrets, esotericism and various subjective ecstatic states that are erroneously taken to be as goals in themselves (e.g. we don’t “*become who we are*” or respond to the “*real need of the moment*” by taking a Yoga class on Monday, chanting Buddhist mantras on Tuesday, burning essential oils on Wednesday, fasting on Thursday, etc.)
- The term “authentic Self”, or “essential Self”, is not to be interpreted as, “I am God”. The “Green Fingerprint” ultimately calls for balance in an otherwise clearly imbalanced world.

I realise that, in appealing to a wide target audience, I will no doubt invite the dissatisfaction of certain groups who will feel that I am either failing to honour nature (or ecology) by including ‘spiritual’ principles; or else that I am failing to honour the Absolute Reality by including eco-systemic philosophy. I have no satisfactory answer other than (for the scholars), “*We are all still learning*”; and (for the religious), “*We are all returning*”. Please note that any bolded text within a paragraph *simply* refers the reader to the glossary, which is to be found toward the end of the document.

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INTRODUCTION

“Three things of this world delight the heart: water, green things, and a beautiful face.”
(Mohammed)

A *fingerprint* is the result of the relationship between a finger and the surface it connects with. In other words, the fingerprint attests to the relationship that took place over the threshold between the two. To develop this *analogy* further and closer to the motif of the essay: the green colour of chlorophyll within plants and trees attests to the presence of water and sunlight: withdraw the influence of either the sun or water, or disrupt the *balance* between the two, and the colour disappears, signalling the ill-health of the plant.

The term ‘*green signature*’ (considered within this essay to be a sign of *balance*, *centring*, *unification* and *renewal*) is explored at three basic levels, although the actual core of the essay does not promote this breaking down into strict levels. For the sake of an introduction, the table below provides an outline as to how the green signature features within the different levels (please be aware that these are interconnected):

THE GREEN SIGNATURE:	1) PHYSICAL WORLD	2) MIND / CONSCIOUSNESS			3) ESSENTIAL SELF ¹
PERSPECTIVES	<i>Ecological</i>	<i>Metaphorical</i>	<i>Symbolical</i>	<i>Mythological</i>	<i>Psycho-Spiritual</i>
REPRESENTED BY	Deep Ecology; Eco-Psychology; Gaia Theory	Poetical & allegorical metaphor; eco-architecture	Hermetic symbolism; Archetypal projection Sacred Music; Sacred Dance; Sacred Geometry; Sacred Architecture	Archetypal manifestation / projection	Root Archetype
FINDS EXPRESSION AS	Nature; natural cycles; eco-systemic principle	Rhythm; rhyme; metaphor e.g. “ <i>Philosophical Rose Garden</i> ”; “ <i>where the two seas meet</i> ”; “ <i>Garden of Eden</i> ”; “ <i>Gulistan / Bustan</i> ” etc	Tree-of-Life; Green-Lion; Green-Dragon; Manna; Celestial Dew; Soma etc Harmonic principle; Satkona Yantra; Solomon’s Seal; Vesica Piscis etc	Dumuzi-Tammuz; Osiris; Dionysus; Skanda; Attis; Bacchus Green-Man / Fisher-King	Green-Tara; Khidr
REVEALS / PROMOTES	Interconnectivity & interdependence balance; sustainability; ethics	Interconnectivity & interdependence between consciousness and physical matter balance, beauty, compassion and ethics	Interconnectivity & interdependence between consciousness and form balance, beauty, knowledge and wisdom	Mythical archetypes, as projected mediums between the ‘earth’ and ‘underworld’ / ‘heaven’ balance, beauty, knowledge and wisdom	Trans-egoic (see <i>glossary</i>) essential Self at the threshold between the outer world and inner world of transcendent Spirit Balance, Beauty, Wisdom, Love and Compassion
EFFECTS	Physiological health	Emotional/Psychological health			Centred in <i>Being</i> : responsive to the Real need of the moment

The *first level* relates to the current *ecological* crisis. Sadly, for all our intellectual and technological advancement, modernity appears to have stripped the human mind of most of its inherent reasoning; and, as we rush obsessively toward the deep, dark, trash-can that awaits us at the end of our neon superhighway, it seems as though the world around us is falling apart in the process. This has become evident in the decline of our natural environment, the consequent erratic climatic conditions, our fragmented society and in the ill-health of the human biological organism (e.g. cancer, super-viruses etc). The simple fact of the matter is that *physicality* is part of the human dimension. We have a body which has evolved from natural processes, and this body relies on the integrity of ecological systems in order to sustain itself (i.e. food, water, oxygen, thermoregulation

etc). What this means, therefore, is that *balance* needs to be achieved, not only within the eco-systemic processes themselves, but also within the human mind which forms attitudes, desires and perceptions. One of the distinguishing attributes of the *green signature*, as we will begin to uncover, is the signalling of *balance* within the context of *relationship*. At a biophysical level, this can be observed when balanced amounts of soil nutrients, CO₂, sunlight and water meet at the heart of the botanical world to produce a living *green* mantle. In fact, if one open-mindedly loosens the prevailing paradigm-bear's grip, it appears that one can often detect the presence of what is nourishing or clarified, such as "water" and "light", through an awareness and investigation of an essentially *green* 'signature'. Whether encountered in biology, ecology, or symbolically within the archetypal dimension of psychology, mythology and mysticism, this signature is associated with *balance, unification, renewal* and, at a trans-egoic level, the *direct awareness of the Presence of 'Spirit'*. It is worth adding, at this point, that one of the world's foremost organisations working to stabilise the environment and to educate society on their destructive attitudes toward the environment, is called, "Green Peace".

The *second level* relates to *consciousness*. This, too, is in a crisis, and it is precisely as a result of this crisis that negative attitudes, desires and perceptions are being formed and projected into the outer world. These negative attitudes, desires and perceptions inevitably feed back into the eco-sociological equation, thereby exacerbating the crisis of eco-system, social-system and that of consciousness. Of course, fragmentation of consciousness will sooner or later manifest as personality disorder, which, in turn, leads to instances of abuse, the fragmentation of self, of family, of community and of society. It is important to realise that it is not only the physical body which has 'evolved' from natural processes, but also consciousness. My use of the term "evolved" will need to be clarified at this early stage. The physical world, in this essay, is considered to be the ongoing manifestation of an emanation process that developed from (and is contained within) what is termed "Absolute Reality" (read: *God*; or the *Real* or the *True* etc). This Reality is not in any way reduced in the process, nor should one think of this Reality as existing solely at the very beginning or end of Time/Creation, but rather as being profoundly present within the '*Eternal Now*':

*"There is indeed a falling away from Godhead, from Spirit, from the primordial Ground... This falling away is called involution... And once involution has occurred – and Spirit becomes unconsciously involved in the lower and lowest forms of its own manifestation – then evolution can occur: Spirit unfolds in a great spectrum of consciousness, from the Big Bang to matter to sensation to perception to impulse to image to symbol to concept to reason to psychic to subtle to causal occasions, on the way to its own shocking self-recognition, Spirit's own self-realization and self-resurrection. And in each of those stages – from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit – evolution becomes more and more conscious, more and more aware, more and more realized, more and more awake, with all the joys and all the terrors, inherently involved in that dialectic of awakening."*²

In other words: consciousness, our "essential Self" and "Spirit" aren't something we are busy growing from the physical world upwards (and therefore secondary), but rather they are continually being *unveiled* or *awakened-to* (and are therefore primary). The physical world is experienced, not only as an elaborate linear extension of the "Big Bang" phenomenon, but essentially as the continual unveiling of a "vertical" dimension that is harmonically-principled and ultimately rooted in the Oneness of Reality:

*"I was a hidden Treasure
And I longed to be known
And so I created the worlds"*³

Whenever the term “evolution” is used within this essay, it is within the abovementioned framework that I am operating.

The fields of Quantum Physics, Radical Ecology and Eco-Psychology have alerted us to the fact that a state of **interdependence** exists, not only between the human body and the physical environment (as evidenced in the fields of Deep Ecology and Systems Theory), but *also* between human consciousness and the physical environment. Carl Gustav Jung, one of the fathers of contemporary psychology, comments:

“Whereas the scientific attitude seeks, on the basis of careful empiricism, to explain nature in her own terms, Hermetic philosophy had for its goal an explanation that included the psyche in the total description of nature. The empiricist tries, more or less unsuccessfully, to forget his archetypal explanatory principles, that is, the psychic premises that are sine qua non of the cognitive process, or to repress them in the interests of ‘scientific objectivity’. The Hermetic philosopher regarded these psychic premises, the archetypes, as inalienable components of the empirical world picture... As the findings of modern physics show: the observer cannot be finally eliminated, which means that the psychic premises remain operative.”⁴

To elaborate on interdependence would expend too much of this essay, but what can be brought through as being relevant to the *green signature* is a heightened concept of *balance* within a now expanded context of *relationship*. Since the frontiers of science have revealed to us an intricate, interconnected and interdependent relationship between consciousness and the exterior world, it can be suggested that the human mind will respond to processes existing within the physical world (and visa-versa). The positive effects of balance and eco-systemic relationship within nature are, therefore, not only reflected within the observing conscious mind, but also communicated to and from the unconscious mind, thus performing a positive transformation within any given individual. For example, a walk near the ocean, or a weekend retreat in the forest, translates into therapy for both the body and the mind. Since nature has taken billions of years to evolve, it reflects (assuming that it has not been disturbed) harmonic principles that have a variety of positive effects on the nervous system, and are experienced by humanity as *beauty*. On the other hand, spending the weekend camped-out on a landfill site, or in an inner-city back alley, is almost guaranteed to impact negatively on both the body and the mind. An impoverished outer environment undoubtedly reflects in the human mind as an impoverished sense of self (and visa-versa!). From this we can deduce that the human body-mind is hardwired toward harmonic principles, something that becomes clearly evident in our response to music at a seemingly universal level.^{5 6}

The creative principle in nature is also present within the human mind as the creative imagination. The imagination deals with *images* and, by cognitive association, the formation of *ideas* (constrained by *language* and often mediated by what we know as the *intellect*). There are other faculties of mind, such as *memory*, *reason* and *will* etc, but I do not wish to digress from the objectives of this essay. Images and ideas, we know, are generally associated with language, and this is important from the perspective of *metaphor*. Metaphor develops from *language* to *image* to *idea*, and since we are currently living in an age of frenetically-marketed ideas and images, we should be mindful of our choice in both metaphor and image. In this essay I present the idea that the organic/natural/eco-systemic/harmonic metaphor, or symbol, is highly efficient in conveying ‘*meaning*’, as well as grounding a connective cognition of the concept of *balance* and *unity*, because consciousness is interconnected-interdependent and consequently responds to ecological integrity (*itself* a celebration of harmonic principle). Of course, this is not to imply that consciousness can be “reduced” to these systems, but that it nonetheless finds relationship and has a sympathetic response to nature’s processes. From an eco-psychological perspective, the implications of a *green signature* appear vast, not only for a rapidly deteriorating planet, but also for a global mindset that is in dire need of a balanced and sustainable ‘awakening’. Earlier we looked at the “*observable positive effects of balance and eco-systemic relationship within nature*” as

“performing a positive transformation within any given individual”. Taking into account all mutual interconnectivity: any human indulgence in idea, image, symbol or metaphor will equally affect the outer world (in one way or another), and at present we seem to be caught in a rather tumultuous cycle. This is the crisis we all know and are struggling to come to terms with. Surely, then, to attune to harmonic principles, and their ultimate anchorage in the Real, is to inevitably move toward a *balanced* existence. The question one might ask is: does the outside world reflect harmonic principles; are these principles rooted in the Real; and is this of importance to us? Well, nature, by its very existence, *must* be rooted in the Real; sacred geometry and ecology reveal that nature gravitates toward harmonic principles; and, if we are interconnected-interdependent, then *this* must surely be of importance to humanity from the perspective of both body and consciousness:

“The sun and moon both run with precision. The stars and the trees all bow down in prostration. He erected heaven and established the balance.”⁷

Therefore, to employ the use of metaphor such as that encountered below:

*“Soul of my soul of the soul of a hundred universes,
be water in this now-river, so jasmine flowers
will lift on the brim, and someone far off
can notice the flower-colors and know
there’s water there.*

*‘The sign is in the face.’ You can look at an orchard
and tell if it rained last night. That freshness
is the sign.”⁸*

This consciously/unconsciously activates the underlying interrelationships which, in turn, instill a *harmonic* and no-less *fertile* sense of meaning to the mind/world which receives the metaphor and interprets the harmonic image as a vision of beauty:

*“The Platonic option that ‘Beauty is the splendour of the True’
expresses without equivocation the profound, intimate,
ontological relationship between the Real and the Beautiful, or
between Being and Harmony; a relationship that implies... that
Beauty is sometimes a more striking and transforming argument
than a discursive proof; not logically more adequate, but humanly
more miraculous.”⁹*

In this regard, one might wish to say:

*“Our essential Truth, our Centre, is the most important principle
in our life and the current obsession with sensory ‘entertainment’
runs contrary to our deepest need”*

And while this probably drives a certain message home, it might be considered a rather linear way of appealing to an otherwise multi-dimensional existence. This statement could additionally be filtered through the medium of poetry in order to add dimension to the meaning:

*“Let the Sun burst into your skies,
your world revolving around it
(all life is given thus!)
Of what use is a candle,
or some comforting flame?
(a hungry person has no need
for warm blankets)”*

In assuming the full spectrum of consciousness, its interconnectivity and the powerful influence of the unconscious/supraconscious dynamic in our lives, the above poem *roots* an understanding of the need to become aware of (and align with) a greater Reality. A further example, focusing more directly on the choice of metaphor, can be seen below. The previous poem now substitutes the organic metaphor with those encountered in consumer-based pop-culture:

*“Let the Dealer pump Credit to your platinum,
bump-n-grind with that plastic, my man
(then for sure your bitch will come running)
Just chill with the grilling my brother;
don’t stress like a sorry-ass’d florist!
(a mean mofo like you,
don’t need no Barbie-Doll blues)”*

And while the above may carry some slick street-poet potential, it unfortunately also brings with it far too many negative (read: dissonant) connotations which keep the mind pinned to constrictive forms/concepts of world and self. In this there is no grounded relationship, no saving grace, nothing to draw the relationships into alignment with an *essential Self*: *that* which stabilises the parts and responds to the True.

Other than the role of the creative imagination, the function of metaphor and the structuring of ideas, one of the most influential structures of mind is the **archetypal**. This structure is largely embedded in the unconscious/supraconscious mind, but it also exerts an influence within the sub-conscious realm (dream-state) and within the **Imaginal** realm (*mundus imaginalis* [Latin]; *alami mithal* [Arabic]), where the archetypes become actualised. Quite simply, the more an archetype is encountered, the more functional it becomes, although Jung was explicit in his statement that while it is necessary to integrate the contents of various archetypes (e.g. the shadow, anima/animus etc) into the psyche, one should be cautious not to identify oneself with any of the archetypes except the stabilising Self: our unified centre of being.

In this essay, I have focused on the *Green-Man/Woman* archetype because it is the root disposition/manifestation of what I have termed the “*green signature*”. The Green-Man/Woman appears to be one of the leading archetypes in guiding us toward the unveiling of an *essential Self*, not only because this archetype symbolically images our *inherent connection* to the Real (before and beyond theological dispute) but also because it responds to the full dimension of our existence (from the ecological self through to the essential Self) and *balances* the otherwise destructive urge of certain ascetics and transcendentalists who seem intent on blazing a heroic trail heavenwards but are totally oblivious to their destructive attitudes toward their own body/mind, or toward women, or toward a visibly abused natural environment. It’s one thing for a transcendentalist to claim that God’s motives (or Truth) will never truly be understood, but it’s quite another thing for a transcendentalist to claim (that) Absolute Station for himself (hence, the need for a *balanced* perspective or methodology). Of course, in order for the Green-Man/Woman archetype to (ultimately) be of any value it must, by definition, be actualised within the psyche (*viz.* “the proof is in the pudding” and not in endless discussion).

The *third level* relates to what has been termed, “the essential Self”. This can also be said to be our essential ‘Humanity’:

“The human being is the end product of a process in which this Creative Spirit has shaped and evolved a witness who could embrace the covenant it offered. If the human being is the most evolved Care-taker (khalifa) of the Creative Spirit - with the potential for conscious presence, will, love, and creativity - then our humanity is the degree to which this physical/spiritual vehicle, and particularly our nervous system, can reflect or manifest Spirit. That which is most sacred in us, that which is deeper than

our individual personality, is our connection to this Spirit, Cosmic Life, Creative Power, or whatever name we may use.”¹⁰

The essential Self is to be considered, not as an accumulation of subjective experiences, states or mystical facts; or as an abstract/squinted postulation of mind; but as the unveiling of a core *trans-egoic* Self which exists profoundly as “expanded” *Being* (although, this Self should not be considered Absolute; it develops still infinitely within the Eternal Now):

“This Being, this isness, is the fundamental energy and substance of the universe. When we are in a state of presence, fully awake and alive, we are open to this isness, to Being, and since the essence of this Being is the Love that created existence, our experience of Being is Love.”¹¹

The crisis of the essential Self is only a crisis in so much as this Self is ignored. The essential Self responds to the presence of “Spirit”, and when Spirit is denied anchorage within the Centre (much like the denial of light or water in plants) then all levels of our existence begin to fall into varying degrees of fragmentation. However, once we begin to operate from the level of the essential Self and consequently open up to the Real, the ‘*green signature*’ automatically begins to be traced at every level, since, from a relative point of view, *balance* is the inevitable result of enlightened living:

“On the one hand, one must see God in Himself, beyond the world, in the Emptiness of Transcendence; on the other hand and ipso facto, one must see God everywhere: first of all in the miraculous existence of things and then in their positive and theomorphic qualities; once Transcendence is understood, Immanence reveals itself of itself.”¹²

THE MYSTERY OF THE GREEN-MAN

“And this delightful Herb
whose tender Green
Fledges the River’s Lip
on which we lean –
Ah, lean upon it lightly!
for who knows
From what once Lovely Lip
it springs unseen”¹³

The above quote not only expresses the colour ‘green’, which is to become central to the theme of this essay, it also forms part of a poetic offering on how not to get entangled in the intellectual/spiritual search so as to ultimately lose sight of the very ‘substance’ one is seeking. Similarly, the methodology adopted in the exploration of the Green-Man/Woman archetype, *ideally*, should not be separated from the very purpose (actualisation) of the archetype itself. In this sense, no written effort can adequately ‘unpack’ an archetype since it is ultimately rooted in the unconscious/supraconscious mind as a “pre-existent disposition” and therefore it, and its function, cannot be confined to conceptual straitjackets.

In true trickster fashion, the *Mystery of the Green-Man* and the *Quest for the Green-Man* become faithfully interwoven and inseparable in a process whereby the ‘Green’ is best ‘caught’, rather than actually ‘taught’. This is typified in the Zen concept of “Looking at the Moon (and not at the finger pointing toward the Moon)”. Perhaps at the outset it might seem too bold to initiate the statement that the *Quest for the Green-Man* appears to be the quest for an authentic Self (*i.e.* a renewed and balanced relationship with Reality), yet it is fitting that this concept guides the discussion process. As such, it becomes an eco-psycho-spiritual equivalent to the **hermetic** *Quest for the Philosopher’s Stone*. Paradoxically, the face staring out from *behind* the foliate Green-Man sculptures, whether peaceful or distorted, might just represent (or offer reflection on) the very ‘leaf-fresh’ nature staring or dwelling *within* oneself: the very ‘Breath’ our suffocating society is either denying or reaching out for: our *essential Being*: resurrected, clarified and nurtured by the *Presence of Spirit*. Some have chosen to identify this enlivening Presence as “the Face” or “the Friend”; I have used the term *green signature/fingerprint* as an *indicator* of this Presence/Face/Friend in much the same way that green vegetation indicates the presence of water within a desert oasis. Hildegard von Bingen, the late Catholic mystic, similarly referred to God’s Presence by the term, *Viriditas*, meaning: the “Greening Truth” (*viz.* the Truth that vivifies).

Although this essay examines the significance of a *Green* archetypal quality, it is largely guided by the Green-Man/Woman manifestations embodying this specific signature. The importance of the Green-Man/Woman archetype has been outlined in the William Anderson’s book, “*Green Man: The archetype of our oneness with the Earth*”. It is through the existence of, and contemplation of, this enigmatic archetype that we begin to sense a balance, not only between the biocentric and anthropocentric factions along the ‘horizontal’ axis of our existence, but also between the physical and spiritual dimensions within the ‘vertical’ axis: *balance*, *unification* and *renewal* being three significant attributes of the *green signature*.

The terms *Green*, *Breath*, *Water* and *Light* may well be used interchangeably within the context of this essay as they are all enlivening qualities which closely relate to each other. Although mostly associated with an idea of “nature”, they should be understood not as substances existing purely ‘out-there’, but rather intimately linked to consciousness and therefore linked to the health of consciousness. Not only have centuries of mysticism made this link abundantly clear, but also Eco-Psychology and the fields of the “New Physics” have discovered interconnectivity between consciousness and the physical universe. Nature, as a system dependent on ecological balance and reflective of harmonic principle, would consequently provide a grounded source of ‘meaning’ for a global consciousness that is currently fragmented and rapidly deteriorating into extremely painful and unnecessary nihilism. Indeed, plants and trees (for example) are certainly fitting symbols for *life*, *beauty* and *community*, as they exemplify and embody the concept of *relationship*

through association with light/heat, water, oxygen, minerals and other life forms. They appear as catalysts and gathering points for the physical and hermetical elements of fire, water, air and earth, and flag the balancing of these elements abundantly with the colour *green*. Collectively they create living essentials such as food, habitat, oxygen, growth and beauty; not forgetting the depth they add, as organic symbols, to psychological health. Is there any need, therefore, for humanity to deny, degrade or destroy an established and integral discourse as this?

THE DILEMMA

While searching the World Wide Web, a posting-board exhibiting the classic “Green-Man Quest” predicament was discovered. Someone explains: “...*the more I read about him, the more diffuse he seems to become. Anything even remotely Sylvan seems to be lumped into the Greenman category... I would like a little more EX-clusive understanding of this archetype.*” Anyone who has ever followed the Green-Man can certainly empathize with the predicament; but discovering, for example, different shaped September Bushes in a garden, it should come as assurance that although a variety of environmental conditions have dispersed and shaped the aforementioned shrubs, they have in fact seeded from the same parent plant and still carry the essential species form: *Polygala myrtifolia*. Knowing this allows for faith in, and acceptance of, the basic species form. In a similar way, although different cultures and conditions have manifested mythical figures such as Dumuzi-Tammuz, Osiris, the European Green-Man, Green Tara etc, one may now move toward a more solid relationship with the root archetype, while at the same time acknowledging its manifested paradoxes. At this stage, it is important to acknowledge the ‘mirror’ of life with its varying degrees of reflection and to assimilate these as best as possible.

THERE’S FRUIT AMONGST THE LEAVES

“(We) have (at least) three eyes of knowing: the eye of flesh, which apprehends physical events; the eye of mind, which apprehends images and desires and concepts and ideas; and the eye of contemplation, which apprehends spiritual experiences... And that, of course, is a simplified version of the spectrum of consciousness, reaching from body to mind to spirit.”¹⁴

To begin with, the colour *green* is vibrantly peaceful. This is why it is an acceptable colour to use in hospitals and healthcare, and why we experience a physiologically-favourable reaction during the onset of the season of Spring. In theatrical circles, the “Green Room” is the room to which actors/actresses withdraw in order to instil peace within their minds before, during and after performances. Despite the negative connotations this colour has received through religious indoctrination, pagan excess and corporate/industrial resistance, it is nonetheless here suggested as a colour representative of health and beauty. It is also considered a colour of action, life and renewal and is interacted with at an accessible eye-level, within nature: our evolutionary habitat (*have you ever noticed how our lungs have the same form as branching trees?*). From a botanical perspective, the colour *green* indicates the presence of chlorophyll: that is, chloroplast cells active within the structures of plant-life. Chlorophyll is predominantly green in colour with yellow-green and blue-green variations. Green light, while being reflected and not actually absorbed, is, however, indicative of chlorophyll and therefore of importance from our perspective of visual observation. The function of chlorophyll is to contain, convert and store the sun’s energy in order to chemically bond sugar molecules, otherwise known as the process of *photosynthesis*. Plant, animal and human systems utilise these sugars as an energy source. During this process, oxygen, vital to human and animal life, is released into the atmosphere. This is not only important within the field of organic chemistry, but it also provides an appropriate hermetic reference in the Green-Man Quest. Incidentally, the word “chlorophyll” is derived from the Greek word *khloros*, which means not only *green*, but *importantly* it includes the notion of “fresh, moist and blooming”.

Contemporary Hermeticist, Stuart Nettleton, in his book “*The Alchemy Key*” informs us:

“*The importance of the colour green is that it is the colour of the heart and the sign of the life of the heart. It is the colour of resurrection, the celestial pole and the highest light of the Mystery. It is the colour of Mohammed. It is associated with the Great Mother Goddess in her Egyptian aspect as Isis, the Lady of Nature.*”¹⁵

From a hermetical perspective, botanical nature, owing to its relationship with light/heat, water, air and soil provides a fitting discourse for the *interaction* and *balance* between “spirit” and “matter”. This is further reflected in Indian **Yoga** philosophy/practice, where the colour *green* is found in association with the **Anahata Chakra**: a subtle energy point represented near the heart and lung portion of the body.¹⁶ This Chakra lies in the *centre* of the basic 7-Chakra system (see *Figure 1*) and is contemplated as a way of restoring *balance* to the system.

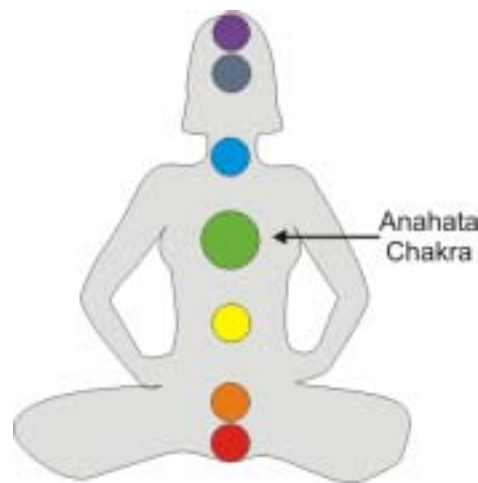


Figure 1

Interestingly, in the *middle* of the visual colour spectrum (as observed in light dispersion, via prism-refracted sunlight) we find a *green* bandwidth (see *Figure 2*), reflecting the 2:1 octave signature that is also discovered in music theory, more specifically in the natural overtone scale (as demonstrated on the **monochord** instrument).



Figure 2

The concept of *centring*, *balancing* and *binding* (or unifying) is contained within the *green signature* as it reflects throughout the levels: in photosynthesis, an essentially translucent light source engages with the green catalyst, chlorophyll, to form useable energy; in ecology, this energy rich vegetation feeds and provides habitat for multifarious life forms; in white (*i.e.* clear) light analysis, the colour green *centres* itself within the split spectrum; in psychology, the Green-Man/Woman archetype symbolically images the *threshold* of the true Self; in mysticism, true Wisdom, Beauty,

Love and Compassion (i.e. the Hermetic Philosophers' "Rose Garden") are clarified by the translucent *light* (Arabic: *nur*) of Spirit (*ruh*).

'Green', therefore, becomes reinforced as a colour representative of *centring*, *balance* and, in relation to the vertical dimension, elevated *binding* (we also find that the Anahata Chakra is associated with Love and Devotion). An interesting geometrical symbol connected to the Anahata Chakra further reinforces both its hermetic and yogic connection, with necessary balance and binding. This symbol (see *Figure 3a*) is ancient and is found within different cultures. In the **Kabbalah** (Jewish mysticism) the hexagram is viewed as *Solomon's seal*: a symbol still surviving in western esoteric Schools. In Hindu religious culture, it is known as the *Satkona Yantra* and indicates, in geometrical form, the sacred *union* between Shiva and Shakti: the masculine and feminine energies respectively.¹⁷ In the hermetic arts, these two interpenetrating triangles represent the *balance* between water (lunar ∇) and fire (solar Δ), with the sacred "child" (the spiritually receptive Heart [*qalb*]) being thereby 'resurrected'. Robert Fludd, the English Hermeticist, while documenting the symbolic interplay between these two triangles, commented "*I confess before my God that I could say so much about the possible uses of these two pyramids that I could easily fill a huge volume.*"¹⁸ Interestingly, this hexagram carries the numerical value of 6, which is the same amount of electrons that a carbon atom, the *binding* block in nature, carries.¹⁹ A Zulu variation symbolising *love* and *unity* may be seen in *Figure 3b*.²⁰ Honeycombs also incorporate the hexagon principle. Both bees and honey feature strongly in Egyptian mythology, especially in relation to the sun.



Figure 3a

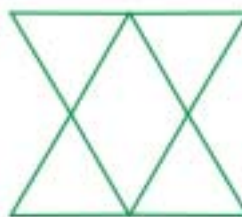


Figure 3b

*"The six-pointed star... tells the wise men of the birth of their philosophical child"*²¹

The hexagram's association with 'light' is encountered at many levels, even the arbitrary (a simple example being the appearance of hexagon-shaped solar flares which become visible in camera lenses when directed toward sunlight). To elaborate on **Gematria**, however, would amount to a digression from the original intention of this study, which is to explore the importance of the *green signature* in the quest for a balanced Self.

THE GREAT GODDESS AND HER SON-LOVER

From a purely psychological perspective, an *archetype* is a permanent, underlying, "pre-existent disposition" within the unconscious mind, which, when actualised, presents itself to consciousness as an image or symbol. Its roots are mostly embedded in our pre-historic development and our only true connection with an archetype is to encounter it and allow it to reveal itself. Similarly, the roots of the Green-Man/Woman are embedded in pre-history.²² We can, however, detect distinct traces of the Green-Man/Woman during the middle to late Bronze-Age, manifested in the Mesopotamian goddess (Inanna-Ishtar) and the Egyptian goddess (Isis), both of whom carry the title "Green One" largely because of their role in restoring life and fertility to the people and the land, often in conjunction with their son/lover/consort, Dumuzi-Tammuz and Osiris respectively.²³ From a psycho-spiritual perspective, one could hypothesize that these mythical couples are the archetypal expressions of the relationship between Spirit (as goddess) and the essential Self (as gardener/shepherd-king/fisher-king). The relationship between the goddess and her consort (Spirit and the true Self) is like the sun/water to the earth, the result being an abundance of verdant "offspring" (the "mystical garden" of Wisdom, Love and Compassion). Both Dumuzi-Tammuz and

Osiris likewise receive the title “Green One” and become the manifested ancestors to a host of Green-Ones which follow.

KHIDIR

Al-Khadir, an Arabic term meaning both “green” and “verdant”, is the etymological root for the Middle-Eastern character called Khidr: “*the Green One*”. Variouslly encountered as Khidr, Khizr, Khezr, Hizir (Turkish), Qadir or Khudeer: all point to a legendary figure who is said to have discovered the infamous “Waters-of-Life” and is thus immortal. Esoteric Islamic researcher, Tom Cheetham, informs us:

“In accordance with Islamic iconography, the color of the final stage is emerald green. For [Henry] Corbin this stage marks the meeting with the heaven Guide, the perfectly individuated and individual Angel of Humanity and Angel of Knowledge that is the biblical Angel of the Face. This is the Figure of whom Mohammad could say: ‘I have seen my Lord in the most beautiful of forms.’ It announces the truth that beauty is the supreme theophany. The Qur’anic source for this Person is Sura XVIII... The seeker is born into his true self through the encounter with Khidr, the interpreter of a law beyond the law, the divine hermeneut.”²⁴

It is important to examine this encounter between Moses and Khidr, as it provides critical dimension to the Green-Man archetype. Below is the excerpt from the Qur’an:

...One day Moses said to his servant:

“I will not cease from my wanderings until I have reached the place where the two seas meet, even though I may journey for eighty years”

But when they had reached the place where the two seas meet, they forgot about their cooked and packed breakfast fish; and the fish somehow came alive and found its way out and through a stream into the sea. Now when they had journeyed past this place, Moses said to his servant:

“Bring us our breakfast, for we are weary from this journey”

But the other replied “Oh! See what has befallen me! When we were resting there by the rock, I forgot the fish. Only Shaytan can have put it out of my mind and in wondrous fashion it found its way to the sea”

Then Moses said “But that is the place we seek!”

And so they went back the way they had come. And they found one of Our servants, whom we had endowed with Our grace and Our wisdom.

Moses said to him “Can I follow you, that you may teach me, as guidance, some of the wisdom you have learnt?”

But he answered “You will not bear with me, for how should you bear patiently with things you cannot comprehend?”

Moses said “If Allah wills, you shall find me patient; I shall not in anyway disobey you”

He said "If you are bent on following me, you must ask no question about anything till I myself speak to you concerning it"

The two set forth, but as soon as they embarked, Moses' companion bored a hole in the bottom of the ship.

"A strange thing you have done! exclaimed Moses "Is it to drown her passengers that you have bored a hole in her?"

"Did I not tell you" he replied "that you would not bear with me?"

"Pardon my forgetfulness" said Moses "Do not be angry with me on this account"

They journeyed on until they came across a certain youth. Moses' new companion drew a sword and slew him, and Moses said "You have killed an innocent man who has done no harm. Surely you have committed a wicked crime?"

"Did I not tell you" he replied "that you would not bear with me?"

Moses said "If ever I question you again, abandon me; for then I should deserve it"

They travelled on until they came to a certain city. They asked the people for some food, but the people declined to receive them as their guests. There they found a wall that was on the point of falling down. Moses' companion raised it up without fuss and qualm, and Moses said "You know, had you wished, you could have demanded payment from these ungrateful townfolk for your labours"

"Now the time has arrived when we must part!" said the other "But first I will explain to you those acts of mine which you could not bear with in patience. Know that the ship belonged to some poor fishermen. I damaged it because in the rear was a tyrant king who was taking every ship by force and for certain corruptible means. As for the youth, his parents both are true believers and we feared lest he should plague them with his wickedness and unbelief. It was our wish that their Lord should grant them another in his place, a son more righteous and more filial. As for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city whose father was an honest man. Beneath it, a treasure lays buried which is to be their inheritance. Your Lord decreed in His mercy that they should dig out their treasure when they grew to manhood where it would not be wasted, or swindled from them. What I did was not done by caprice. That is the meaning of the things you could not bear with in patience"

The person referred to as "One of our servants, whom We had endowed with Our grace and Our wisdom" is the figure of Khidr, "the Verdant One" who plays a pivotal role in Islamic mysticism.

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In this rather startling account, we begin to extract an important function of the *green signature* through the presence and actions of its root archetype, Khidr. Similar to the chlorophyll within our plants and trees, Khidr (the “Green One”) images the threshold between our ‘Solar’ (spiritual) and ‘Earthly’ (physical) existence [i.e. ‘where the two seas meet’], thus providing us with sustenance and vitality (i.e. Khidr transcends and refreshes our usually dry, or abstract, religious understanding [i.e. the dead, dry fish] by representing the connective sustenance of pure spiritual revelation). As though exhibiting a ‘Dionysian’ element, Khidr *begins* as a flagrant symbol of the “irrepressible Spirit”²⁶ (the sudden resurrection of the fish). Contemporary poet, Coleman Barks, comments on the bridging function of Khidr:

*“He exists on the edge between the seen and the unseen. When Moses vows to find the place ‘where the two seas meet’, meaning where the spiritual and the worldly mix, he meets Khidr...Khidr represents the inner dimension which transcends form. He is the personification of the revealing function of the metaphysical intellect, the ‘prophetic soul’. He especially appears to solitaries, those who are cut off from normal channels of spiritual instruction.”*²⁷

Khidr, in his role as ‘guide’ into the deeper spiritual mysteries, is also associated by some mystics with the Greek psychopomp, Hermes (Idris):

*Idris, Enoch, al-Khidr and Hermes all seem to be one person. This guide al-Khidr initiates Moses into deeply esoteric lore. The ijnaji Ithami, in Hadith traditions, consider al-Khadir as a holy being, mysterious and immortal whom all spiritual initiatory orders revere as the Master of the Path (Tariqa). Al-Khidr is often mentioned as the Green Angel Guide in Islamic writings. In fact, in Egyptian frescoes he is some times painted green with the head of an ibis.*²⁸

From his paper, “*Bacchus and Isis in Britain*”, researcher, Steve Ash tells us:

*“The (al-Khadir) archetype was said by Sufis to represent the forces of nature or power inherent in all things, and was regarded as the guardian spirit of Islam. More popularly it was identified with ‘Elijah’ of the Jews and ‘St George’ (Green George) of the Christians. It is believed that al-Khadir was originally adopted from Indian Sufis who had taken the archetype from the Hindu god Skanda (a son and aspect of Shiva). Skanda in turn was closely related to Al-Skanda (Alexander) by the Indians, who in turn, like Shiva, was associated with Dionysus.”*²⁹

Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee adds vital dimension to what is essentially the true significance of Khidr:

*“One of the most important archetypal figures in Sufism is Khidr, ‘the green one.’ Khidr represents direct revelation, the direct inner connection with God that is central to the mystical experience...³⁰ Khidr is not an abstract mystical figure, but an archetype of something essential within us. ‘The Green One’ images a natural aspect of our divinity, something so ordinary that we overlook it. To follow the way of Khidr is to awaken to our own natural state of being with God and with life. In this natural state of being we know how to respond to the real need of the moment.”*³¹

Jung shared a similar interpretation, albeit expressed in a psychological framework:

“Khidr may well be a symbol of the Self. His qualities symbolize him as such; he is said to have been born in a cave i.e. in darkness. He is the “Long-lived One” who continually renews himself, like Elijah. He is analogous to the second Adam... he is a counsellor, a Paraclete, “Brother Khidr”. Anyway, Moses looks up to him for instruction. Then follow these incomprehensible deeds which show how ego-consciousness reacts to the superior guidance of the Self through the twists and turns of fate. To the initiate who is capable of transformation it is a comforting tale; to the obedient believer, an exhortation not to murmur against Allah’s incomprehensible omnipotence. Khidr symbolizes not only the higher wisdom but also a way of acting. Anyone hearing such a mystery tale will recognize himself in the questing Moses and forgetful Joshua...”³²

There may be variation in interpretation, but what we do discover is a plausible relationship between a host of mythical manifestations (e.g. Dumuzi-Tammuz, Osiris, Dionysus, Skanda-Kumara etc) and what appears to be a guiding archetype, significantly-evolved in the Qur’anic manifestation of Khidr (who represents transcendent sustenance). Coleman Barks adds further comment:

“Khidr is connected philologically with Elijah and with Utnapishtim of the Gilgamesh epic. He may be partial source, along with Druidic lore, for the enigmatic Green Knight in the Middle English poem ‘Sir Gawain and the Green Knight’.”³³

THE GREEN-MAN IN EUROPE

The “Green-One” appears to shift smoothly into European territory and of course marries well with the already pagan reverence for ‘all things green’. The Order of the Garter, a medieval chivalric order of European and Christian descent, adapted much of their mystic ritual from their sojourns in Persian and Arabic lands.³⁴ They found the fertile tendencies of such a figure as Khidr, suitably fitted to their philosophy of, and reverence for, the Mother aspect of the Divine (Virgin Mary). St George (Green George) the patron saint of the Order is easily associated with Khidr (the Green One) who is, incidentally, the “hidden” initiator of the Sufi mystics. The classical Sufis were Islamic mystics who communed with saints and mystics from many other religions/cultures. The connection between the names *Sufiyya* and *Sophia*, as well as the relationship of the Garter Order’s knowledge to the Sufi culture of chivalry (*futuwwa*), begs further analysis but it is beyond the scope of this essay and can be better followed through Shah’s book, *The Sufis*.³⁵ Although carrying the ‘Green’ mystery into the European mystic underground, the Order of the Garter did not introduce an entirely new concept, but rather reshaped an already ancient presence notably manifested in Euro-/Celtic lore and legend. The European Green-Man represents, in one aspect, a return to the role of “intimacy” in relating to God: a relationship with Divine Presence, resulting in the “resurrection” of self, symbolised by the abundant green foliage of the Green-Man. It is now possible to see why Christ is sometimes associated with the Green-Man, and also why the acacia branch becomes a symbol of renewal within Masonic fraternities. In addition, the disgorging of vegetation from the eyes, ears, nose and mouth in some of the Green-Man sculptures appears to represent the irrepressible nature of the spiritual Essence laying at the very foundation of our existence: the Truth that lays *within*, and that which devours our fragile concepts of self as we struggle and resist our own inner transformation on the path toward the Real. Centuries before, a **Gnostic** impulse was found irrepressibly carving its way through European spirituality, quite noticeably in the Cathar and Templar flourish that occurred in southern France. The concept of a returning or awakened “Fisher King” (symbolic of the “individuated” essential Self) is well documented in the Grail mythology as well as in the mythology of many other cultures, both modern and ancient. Parallel to this Gnostic revival and mini-renaissance we find the production of

thousands of Green-Man sculptures, very often within the gothic cathedrals and churches themselves.

Whether consciously intended, or unconsciously projected, the existence of the Green-Man sculptures and their proximity to the much older and rarer **Sheela-na-gig** sculptures, certainly seems to reinforce the idea and necessity of a healed and fertile “consort” who once again returns to restore the exploited and barren wasteland into a now fertile ‘paradise’. It has been noted that the name *Sheela* bears resemblance to the Egyptian word *Sherah*, meaning “water of a source”, and *-gig* bears resemblance to another Egyptian word *kekh* meaning “sanctuary”.³⁶

“Truly, the God-conscious ones are in gardens and rivers, in a place of Truth in the presence of an Able Sovereign”³⁷

In the artworks of Christian mysticism we find Christ stepping out from the *vesica piscis* (the “place between”), a form closely resembling that of the Egyptian *Ru* hieroglyph. The *vesica piscis* is formed by the interlocking of two equally sized circles to produce a “place” or “space” between. This interlocking resembles the shape of a fish: a form long since associated with Christ. The mathematical ratio of this *vesica piscis* was referred to by the Pythagoreans as the “measure of the fish”. It is interesting to note that Khidr is also associated with fish and is sometimes depicted as arriving upon the back of a fish at the place “*where the two seas meet*” (i.e. the “*place between*”).³⁸ This also calls to mind the Chaldean *Oannes*, the archetypal “fish”-god of Wisdom who brought the Wisdom of civilisation to the Babylonians. Other than the creative birth motif, *Sheela* (much the same as Isis and Mary) appears to be conferring a symbolic initiation. Hildegard von Bingen, the Catholic mystic, developed an elaborate system of natural healing and music based on her prolific visions. These visions, associated largely with the “*Viriditas*” (Greening Truth) and the Virgin Mother (as symbolised by the *vesica piscis* in Hildegard’s artworks), can be considered as authentic manifestations of a ‘*green signature*’ that was simultaneously manifesting all over Europe. That the *Green-Man* and the rarer *Sheela* appear in many churches is all the more incredible and points to their very apparent influence on the European psyche. In this regard, William Anderson formed the hypothesis that the *Green-Man* is the archetypal manifestation of Divine Imagination in Nature:

“The Green Man is the threshold of the imagination between our outer natures and our deepest selves and, as he is so closely connected with the Great Goddess, we must also ask, ‘What is the Great Goddess in ourselves?’ In ancient teachings she is Sophia or Wisdom, the wisdom we sorely need and which the Green Man is waiting to transmit to us.”³⁹

Further details on the European *Green-Man* may be found in William Anderson’s book, “*Green Man: The Archetype of our Oneness with the Earth*”, and by following the *Green-Man* web-link provided at the end of this essay. Below is an excerpt from an Internet publication entitled, “*Return of the Green Man*”:

“A god of Spring and Summer, he disappears and returns, year after year, century after century, enacting themes of death and resurrection, the ebb and flow of life and creativity. No human knows how old he is, but it seems he must be among the very oldest of the gods. Unlike most gods of the Iron Age Celts, Norse, and other Indo-European cultures, Green Man carries only a wooden staff, if he bears any weapon at all. He carries no metal, no sword, spear, cauldron, coin, or crown. His clothing is the leaves that grow from and cover his face and body. In some art, branches spring from his head like mighty antlers, bringing to mind Cernunnos, the Celtic Horned God of the Wild Hunt. Some think of him as archetype, others, as superstition, and some see him as a living god. Some, able to tolerate paradox, see him as

all three, simultaneously. His ability to fascinate us reaches past such definitions. Given the Church's condemnation of the old pagan gods, the last place you'd expect to find Green Man is within the Christian places of worship. Nonetheless, his face appears in the carved motifs decorating chapels and cathedrals throughout Europe. Mike Harding - a British artist, researcher - reports having seen at least two thousand images of him in churches of the British Isles. Green Man is by no means confined to that area, and is seen in churches in Germany and France as well.”⁴⁰

THE QUEST FOR THE GREEN WOMAN

In Sufism, the colour green is symbolically representative of the realisation of God.⁴¹ Similarly, Tibetan culture sees the colour green as containing all other colours. It should come as no surprise that one of their most beloved and most accessible of deities embodies this particular colour. *Green Tara*, as she is informally known, is believed to contain the other Tara manifestations. Besides being green, she is typically pictured as a youthful girl and is very beautiful and attractive. Although thought to be somewhat mischievous, this does not detract from her crucial role in the Tibetan tradition. It does, however, represent her accessible nature, and parallels, within an Abrahamic context, the accessible/intimate nature of God's Presence (*Shekhinah*). The name “*Tara*” embodies much of her spiritual functioning:

“In all Sanskrit based modern Indian languages, taaraa is still the word for 'star'. A derivative of the same word means 'the pupil of the eye'... The more popular approach in Buddhism is to interpret Taaraa's name as coming from the causative form of the verb t.'r 'to cross', 'to traverse' or 'to escape'. So we reach the idea of 'she who ferries across', 'she who saves' or 'a saviouress'... Taaraa not only gave guidance across mundane seas and led travellers or pilgrims safely through the pathless ways, such was her power that she could ferry the spiritual seeker across the ocean of existence (bhavasaagara) and show the way out of the dangerous jungles of conditioned existence towards Enlightenment itself... Like any Bodhisattva she has transcended the polarity of masculinity and femininity. Her beautiful form is just the gateway to a deep inner experience which has neither colour, nor form, nor sex... It is also probably no coincidence that the colour green, the colour of the most popular form of Taaraa, is itself suggestive of androgyny. Green is a mixture of blue and yellow, a synthesis of colours which may be said to correspond to heaven and earth, masculine and feminine.”⁴²

The “pupil-of-the-eye” translation is particularly interesting for it suggests not only a point of focus, but also hints at the underlying intimacy of a “*concentrated essence*”.⁴³ It is worth noting that the Hebrew word for God's Presence (“*Shekhinah*”) means “indwelling”. “Pupil of the eye” is also the translation for the Greek word *kore* (core), which simultaneously translates as “*virgin*”.⁴⁴ The Hebrew word *khor*, from the roots “*kaph*” (spoon) and “*resh*” (head), similarly translates into “a cave, hole or eye-cavity”.⁴⁵ A close examination of religious and mythological literature will reveal many of the earth's saviours and gods to have been “cave-born” as well as “born of a virgin”. Many will also recall the encounters of Moses and Khidr in the *kahf*, the cave of revelation. Mount *Qaf* is said to be the home of the Persian mythological Huma Bird (Phoenix) as well as the cave containing the famed Waters-of-Life. There are more obvious esoteric/mystical dimensions to these concepts, such as the “pupil-of-the-eye” confers, but they are probably best left for a more faithful rendition than the one currently being undertaken. Suffice to say, these images appear to be mythical accounts, or archetypal expressions, of an otherwise intimate psycho-spiritual ‘station’ identified as: the Knowing Heart (*qalb*), which exists as the threshold through which the nourishing Spirit (*ruh*) ‘flows’ into this world.

DIONYSUS & SKANDA-MURUKAN

The chief reference for this section is a paper written by Patrick Harrigan entitled "*Dionysus and Kataragama: Parallel Mystery Cults*".⁴⁶ In his paper, Harrigan looks at the obvious similarities between the Greek god Dionysus and the Sri Lankan **Kataragama** god, Skanda-Murukan (Skanda-Kumara). Both these gods appear to represent the paradoxical nature of life and the necessity of integrating this paradox in order to maintain a healthy connection to life and a balanced sense of Self. It echoes the sense of 'Greenness', not only because of the fact that both these gods are connected to vines and nature, but also because it relates to the idea of *balance* and *renewal* through a *union* of opposites. Humanity appears to be painfully poised between spiritual subtleties and base tendencies, and any Jungian will inform us as to what happens when certain unconscious processes are repressed: they manifest through various frightful and sometimes overbearing means. Dionysus, and it appears Skanda too, celebrate the paradox inherent in duality, but from an elevated sense of unity. In order to awaken to and align with the essential Self, one's essential being, one needs to first acknowledge and accept (within a certain degree of wisdom) one's own unconscious 'darkness' (e.g. complexes, instinctual desires, obsessions, buried memories etc); and this is what the play of Dionysus and Skanda comes to represent. Jalâl al-Din Rumi, the great 13th Century poet, explains:

*"How does a part of the world leave the world?
How can wetness leave water?"*

*Don't try to put out a fire
by throwing on more fire!
Don't wash a wound with blood!*

*No matter how fast you run,
your shadow more than keeps up.
Sometimes, it's in front!*

*Only full, overhead sun
diminishes your shadow.*

*But that shadow has been serving you!
What hurts you, blesses you.
Darkness is your candle.
Your boundaries are your quest...*

*You must have shadow and light source both.
Listen, and lay your head under the tree of awe"*⁴⁷

Dionysus and Skanda, as mythological *manifestations* of the Green-Man archetype, appear as counterweights to the institutionalised tendency to suppress gnosis and to instead erect fragile concepts of distant gods through mental postulation and fear. This tendency, or distraction, results in one neglecting to locate and attend to one's very near 'wholeness, one's 'Centre'; or to put it in a mystical framework: the failure to anchor oneself in *Being* which, in turn, mirrors the *Presence* of Spirit (known as the *Friend/Face* of Allah; the Kabbalic *Shekhinah*). Abandonment and the existential guilt-soup that ensues from our distant and disapproving thought-gods, is often what forms the basis of either a spiritual market trading in pastel consolation, or else a fragmented culture characterised largely by drug-dependency, hyper-entertainment and an entourage of personality disorders. It is worth noting, at this point, that the Islamic faith flies under a green flag. This is particularly interesting, for the word "salaam", meaning "peace", is found at the root of the word "Islam" (which roughly translates into, "peace gained through surrender to the Real"). Similarly, from the perspective of the essential Self, our relationship with the "Face of God" is to be considered a peaceful relationship with *Reality* in the fullest sense.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE HERMETICISTS

*"I assure you that anyone who attempts a literal understanding of the hermetic philosophers will lose himself in the twists and turns of a labyrinth from which he'll never find the way out."*⁴⁸

In the many centuries preceding our own, it became increasingly necessary within the context and practice of mysticism, to cloak core experiences and methods of instruction in various "blinds" or forms of allegory, thus *protecting* those who practiced the mystic arts during those very oppressive times, from being harmed. This procedure also protected the sacred sciences from being profaned. Within medieval Hermeticism, for example, the use of blinds (over and above the use of authentic/practical Hermetic symbolism) ensured that the true "meaning" of a specific text, symbol or operation was usually only able to be imparted to those who possessed the right "key" to such information; to others it appeared as mere fable or harmless babble. The sometimes anchorless drift of surface allegory was also partly designed to lead the so-called charlatans into an endless labyrinth from which they weren't able to extract any workable instruction. Those who were inherently capable of comprehending the deeper truths would invariably be able to do so despite the use of "cloaks", while those who were merely partaking out of curiosity would be protected from the overwhelming effect these applications might possibly have on them; certainly, there have been a few aspiring alchemists, hermeticists and gnostics throughout history who have either poisoned themselves or driven themselves insane, notwithstanding those who've utilised occult methods in an attempt to acquire power and wealth. It was because of these various factors that the ideas, experiences, stations and methods of the mystics and occultists were cloaked.

Hermeticists are *spiritual* alchemists from the western esoteric traditions whose methods can be traced back to the "riddle" of the *Emerald Tablet*: an alchemical instruction that acts as a guiding principle for those attempting to find the Essence of Life.⁴⁹ The anchor point and Master Guide for the Hermeticist appears to be *Hermes Trismegistis*, identified by some as a Greek development of the Egyptian god, *Thoth*. It was Hermes, much like Moses, who brought the *Emerald Tablet* to the alchemists.⁵⁰ Part of the Great Work of Hermeticism is to discover and work with the philosopher's vitriol: the *blood of the Green Lion*. According to those successful in the art, nothing was as easy as finding it, "*because it is at home in all the elements, even in the dust of the street*".⁵¹ This appears to be an apt hermetic description of the more religious verses, such as the Christian: "*Raise the stone, and there you will find me; Cleave the wood, and there I am*" and the Quranic phrase: "*Wheresoever you turn, there is the face of God*".



"I am he who was the green and golden lion without cares - within me lie all the mysteries of the philosophers... The green lion that swallows Sol is... our Mercury. It alone works deep into each body

and lifts him up. So if it is mixed with the body, it enlivens and relieves it and transforms it from one consistency into another.”⁵²

From the many books and articles written on the subject and the various formulations that have arisen from alchemy, it is clear that ‘alchemy’ means many different things to many different people. This essay only scrapes the surface in order to filter any possible associations with the *green signature*. In light of the opening hermetical warning, it is probably best not to get too involved in something that ultimately involves a lifelong commitment within an actual school practising this art. Out of respect, it is also probably wise not to make too many assumptions other than the basic recognition that while there may be one Truth, there are sometimes different methods of approaching that Truth.

The hermetic *Green Lion*, by all accounts, appears to correspond to the *green signature*: that is, moving beyond the dry boundaries of the fragmented false self (*nafs al-ammâra*) toward the eventual unveiling of the ‘Complete’ Self (*nafs al-kamilah*) through the discovery of, and relationship with, the receptive Heart (*qalb*) and its guiding Essence (*ruh*). This discovery of Essence (symbolically referenced in the mystical Kabbalah as the “Knowledge and Conversation of one’s Holy Guardian Angel”; and within esoteric Sufism as the encounter with the “Angel of the Face”) results in anything from an initially devastating shock (or possible ecstatic revelation) through to the intensely sober clarity of *Being* (the Philosopher’s Stone which “Is” and “Is-not”). Jung had an alchemical *projection* one night when he awoke to see a “greenish gold” figure of Christ standing at the foot of his bed:

“When I realised that the vision pointed to this central alchemical symbol, and that I had had an essentially alchemical vision of Christ, I felt comforted. The green gold is the living quality, which the alchemists saw not only in man but also in inorganic nature. It is an expression of the life-spirit, the anima mundi or filius macrocosmi, the Anthropos who animates the whole cosmos.”⁵³

Lastly, but by no means least, within the Indian traditions we find reference to the Vedic *Soma*. Legend has it that this divine elixir exists as a magical herb growing on the summit of a sacred mountain. The juices, once ‘chewed’ and ‘swallowed’, are said to produce a state of divine intoxication and immortality. It is the opinion of this author that the elixir mentioned above should be placed in its correct mythical context, where it is to be viewed as being either metaphorical, or archetypal, and not to be literally translated. Literal translations of these and other mythical accounts have led various individuals and groups to consider the Elixir/Philosopher’s-Stone as being an actual psychoactive mineral or plant (to be ingested). Though shamanic cultures certainly did map models of consciousness through the use of entheogens, and though these psychoactive substances undoubtedly alter one’s consciousness, we must be very cautious not to forgo the probable interpretation of this Vedic myth, and similar myth, as being archetypal, metaphorical or allegorical. More often than not, the actual use of psychoactive substances leads to an insatiable quest for never-ending (or ever-elusive) ecstatic states; and, in the final analysis, the humble essential Self (as centred within *Being*) appears to be the furthestest thing from the psychoactivated consciousness.⁵⁴ The Vedic hymn bears some resemblance to the Babylonian *Gilgamesh Epic*, in which Gilgamesh, the Sumerian king, is directed by an immortal being, Utnapishtim, to the depths of the Ocean (symbolically, the spiritual summit) in order to obtain a magical plant, which will bestow on him the gift of immortality.⁵⁵ Gilgamesh discovers the plant but upon bringing it back to the surface, he leaves it unguarded for a moment, whereby a snake steals it. The theft by the snake represents the ever-refreshing moment in which our belief that Eternity (Absolute Reality) can be confined to ‘finite’ material concepts, such as an ever youthful and eternally existing body/brain/idea, is shown to be a misapprehension. This also turns out to be a wonderful allegory for the archetypal journey to the *Centre* (poetically expressed as “*seeing without eyes*”, “*walking without feet*” or “*drinking without a mouth*”) whereby the enfolded Essence is seen to be immeasurable, other than by the very yardstick of Awareness (Pure Consciousness) and Being. This has huge implications for the “Green-Man Quest”, for it suggests that the outward paradox

must remain: a riddle not to be solved according to the nature of a finite intellect. Thus, we find in the Alexander Romances, that it was Alexander's unassuming cook, Khidr ('direct perception'?), who discovered the Water-of-Life ('essential Being'/'Spirit?'); while Alexander (the 'intellect?'), being distracted by colourful stones (thoughts/states/phenomena?), never managed to discover the much sought-after Water.

Archetypal resemblances are found in the Irish tale, "*The Salmon of Hope*" involving a young boy, Finn Mac Cumhail, who manages to catch the ever-elusive Wisdom-Salmon; whereas his elder, Finn Eger, had tried for seven years but in vain. Finn Eger commandeers the catch and puts it on the roast, assigning the boy to keep watch over it and ordering him never to taste it. The rather hungry boy ultimately reaches for the fish and after burning his hand, puts his thumb into his mouth to sooth it. In doing so, he suddenly becomes possessed of true Wisdom and becomes the successor of Finn Eger.⁵⁶ This fish symbol once again links us back to the idea of a redeemer and tales of *resurrection*. We are reminded of Grail pursuer, Percival (also known as the "Green One"), who encounters the Fisher King by a river near *Montsalvat* (the Mountain of Salvation). In the story of *The Holy Grail*, the themes of healing and redemption all revolve around the character of the Fisher King. The sleeping/injured-king-who-needs-to-be-awakened/healed/resurrected motif is discovered in the mythology and legends of many cultures. Once the king is 'healed' and assumes his rightful position, the land is once again restored to health and fertility.

From the added perspective of the Kabbalah, the term *Moreh-Zedek* refers to the archetypal "*Dew of Righteousness*" (manna) which bestows eternal life upon the one who "*swallows*" it. The recipient of this "Dew" might rightly then be called, a "*Teacher of Righteousness*" (Zaddek). We have already found archetypal parallels in the *Elixir* plant of the Sumerian "Gilgamesh Epic", the *Soma* plant of the Indian "Rig Veda" and the receptive *Grail Cup* of Knights Percival and Gawain. Simply unravelled, these exotic references allude to an "*Organ of Perception*" inherent within the human psyche which, upon awakening, confers a *pure Awareness of Being* (esoterically known as the *khirqah* [cloak] of initiation); and just as the *Eternal Ones* (Melchizedek / Khidr) prepare the "*Dew/Cloak*" for the initiate, we also find in the esoteric ritual of the East, the *Sat Guru* (True Light-giver) bestowing the *Nectar of Nam* (God's Name) upon the Sikh/Hindu disciple.⁵⁷

Dew, Manna, Bread-/Water-of-Life, Nam, Shabd, Word, Shekhinah (Dove), Ros, Soma, Haoma, Philosopher's-Stone, "Light", "Wine", "Herb" etc; these are all potent metaphorical synonyms for, or archetypal angles on, the *One Divine Agent* of spiritual transformation, religiously known as the *Presence of God*. The great value in all these wonderful living metaphors is that they also reflect some of the *fertility* of the receptive Awareness they are attempting to point toward: that which responds to the Presence of the Real. This is why symbolic representation, allegorical tales, metaphor, poetry and music are some of the best ways of conveying "meaning" or "understanding". That these mythological archetypes or metaphorical synonyms point toward the need for humanity to align with a trans-egoic essential Self is clarified by the poetic genius of Jalal al-Din Rumi: in reference to a "magical tree" that will bestow "eternal life" upon its discoverer, a wise man from the East advises a completely exhausted and weary seeker who has been travelling for many years in search of this "magical tree":

*"...My son, this is
not an actual tree,*

*though it's been called that. Sometimes it's called a sun,
sometimes an ocean, or*

*a cloud. These words point to the wisdom that comes through
a true human being, which*

*may have many effects, the least of which is eternal life!
In the same way one*

person can be a father to you and a son to someone else,

uncle to another and nephew

*to yet another, so that what you are looking for has many names,
and [yet] one existence...*⁵⁸

WHERE DOES THIS ALL LEAD?

The *Green Fingerprint* is probably not going to amount to much if left frozen at the end of our visual canal on 2-dimensional media and sufficiently suffocated beneath proper English grammar (apologies for the full-justified formatting of text). It is important to approach this essay with an open mind as it has been explored and presented in a multi-disciplinary fashion. Of course, other colours *do* exist besides *green* and they are also wonderfully present within the dispersed light-spectrum; however, what this essay wishes to explore is a *signature* and *archetype* for *contemporary times*; one which anchors the much-needed concept of *balance*, *centring*, *unification* and *renewal*, and one which reflects the natural harmonic structure experienced in light, sound, ecology and consciousness. We have heard that from the darkness of the earth comes the *green* sapling; from the *green* plant comes the white and red roses/grapes; from the *blood of a green lion* comes the hermetical albedo and rubedo phases; behind the *Green Tara* is the White and Red Taras. Michael Maier, in his hermetically-cloaked language, informs us: "To get to the elixirs of the white and red roses, what is required above all is the right source material. This rose wears a *green dress*".⁵⁹ It also appears that from the depths of the human unconscious, the Green-Man/Woman archetype functions in much the same manner. It is an archetype which leads us either painfully or joyfully, but in an inherently Natural manner, toward a mature and receptive station of clarified Being; and this point is crucial: it is not about the worship of trees and rocks (or any *absolute* identification with them), as this completely downplays and ignores the realm of consciousness and 'Spirit', both of which are integral to the establishment of Truth:

*"But whatever be our points of departure – Idea or Symbol or their combination – there is also, and essentially, concentration on the Void, concentration made of certitude and serenity."*⁶⁰

The balance indicated by the *green signature* also relates to the relationship between the "vertical" and "horizontal" axes: between the spiritual and the physical, and between consciousness and matter (i.e. the full Human dimension). In mystical terms, the "Middle Way", as a path, does not imply a denial or repression of one or the other opposites, but simply implies the understanding and integration of *correct relationship* in order for a unified transformation to take place. It is just as easy to overshoot the mark spiritually (and inwardly), as it is to fragment oneself physically (outwardly). It appears that nature understands and reflects abundantly through a *green signature*; the question remains, do we?

As an environmentalist living within an ecologically sensitive world, I am naturally drawn to an ecological paradigm. Humans, being part of Nature, have an important role to play, not only for the sake of this planet's continued existence, but also for the sake and sanctity of their own. Let us hope for all that our awakening is, well... '*Green*'. This is *not* to imply a sentimental or soft-focus romance: the terms "green lion" and "green dragon" *certainly do* suggest a forfeit of preconceived notions (as was the case in the tale of "Moses and Khidr"). We must also not forget that symbols, signatures and discussions about archetypes will only take us a certain distance along the path. Importantly, the object of this investigation is to move toward an unwritten and inexpressible 'texture' that permeates its own archetypal vocabulary; and this is only truly discovered on the threshold of what's known as the Knowing Heart: living from the trans-egoic essential Self. Even the colour *green* falls short of *ultimately* unveiling our root '*Greenness*'; which is to say: Being (and the extent to which Being reflects Spirit or opens up to Absolute Reality) is an awakened and enlivened existence, not some dry religious postulation or intellectual abstraction. In the context of this essay, being '*Green*' is also about being open and aware with regards to our relationship with our essential Truth; it is a manifested sign of *balance* and the "middle way"; a signature from the enfolded One 'rod' with which Hermes and Moses harmonises those two incessantly 'biting snakes' of dual-consciousness.

In this rather short and perhaps incomplete offering, I'd like to close off with Mevlana Rumi's humorous, yet remarkably revealing call to what I have termed the 'Greenness' of the Knowing Heart:

*"Come to the orchard in Spring
There is light and wine
and sweethearts in the
pomegranate flowers.
If you do not come, these do not matter.
If you do come, these do not matter."*⁶¹

GLOSSARY:

Alchemy: The science and art of transformation. Alchemists recognised transformation as a naturally occurring life-process and sought to explore this either through *outer* projection in a laboratory environment, or through *inner* spiritual contemplation. Quite often the outer projection, as manifested in the laboratory retort, served as a focus-symbol for meditation (linking both the outer and inner sciences). Alchemy usually entails a 'substance' moving from its lower state, through various stages to a more refined or 'elevated' state, while observing the laws of nature. For more details on the "*Alchemical Vessel as a Symbol of the Soul*" please follow this endnote.⁶²

Anahata: A **Sanskrit** word meaning "unstruck" or "eternal".

Archetype: A permanent underlying structure within the unconscious/superconscious mind, with potential for creation. This pattern, prototype or "pre-existent disposition" is actualised when it enters consciousness as an image. According to Jung, archetypal images/symbols are shared by the "collective unconscious" throughout the ages and continents, and are therefore imbued with intense psychological content.

Chakra: **Sanskrit** for "wheel" or "disk". General chakra theory points to a system of 7 chakras aligned down/through the centre of the body, which function as conduits/gateways to various levels of consciousness. These *may* correspond to the 'seven heavens', as encountered in spiritual alchemy.

Ecology: The science and study of species inter-relationships. *Deep Ecology* developed out of the ecological crisis through recognition that humans are intimately tied to all living processes. Deep Ecology sees the ecological crisis as a crisis of anthropologic 'consciousness' whereby ecological functioning and health is affected by humanity's perception of itself, the world and our value systems. *Eco-psychology*, as a field, is the attempt to understand the often ignored/misunderstood dimension of consciousness, and its interconnected, **interdependent** relationship with the physical world, within the context of the present ecological crisis.

Gematria: The science and study of *numbers* and their significance/relationship to life. Utilised in **Kabbalist** ritual.

Gnosticism: A term which gains its fullest meaning from the Greek root, "*nos-to*", which basically indicates a "*return home*" (in a mystical sense, this can be interpreted in the light of "Remembrance"; that is: a Remembrance (Realisation) of one's essential state of Being, one's "Divine Covenant" and therefore one's "return home"). More popularly seen to have been derived from the Greek roots of "*Gnosis*" which mean "knowledge" (this is usually to imply a "Knowing", as opposed to blind faith and *exclusively* outer ritual). More specifically it refers to a process of *Realisation* through *inner spiritual unveiling* (which is to be considered a "shared intimacy" with the Presence of God). In this process, the physical Universe and the Divine Feminine are to be neither rejected nor disdained, but rather respected and viewed as essential in the work toward understanding Reality. What Gnosticism seeks to avoid (in practice and definition) is gross *reductionism*, the *endless* intellectual juggling of philosophical premises, *conceptual straitjackets* and the *blind-acceptance of second-hand information* (unverified "truths") via *questionable intermediaries*. These often institutionalised approaches generally downplay our greater connection to Spirit and 'Wholeness'. Although Gnosticism has been traditionally represented by the Manichean dualist theology of "Light" versus the "Dark", it would seem incorrect to reduce Gnosticism to dualist philosophy since *Hermeticism*, *Sufism*, *Qabalah*, *Taoism (of Lao Tzu)* and the *non-dual Buddhist Schools*, for example, are decidedly Gnostic (by definition) and yet do not (as a rule) establish a lingering dualism as their goal. Throughout the centuries, adherents from these abovementioned Schools have confirmed that despite their doctrinal differences and practices, they have been travelling on the

same Path (viz. the Timeless Tradition). A *Gnostic*, therefore, can be defined as someone who, regardless of their religious affiliations or chosen method, attunes to the path of the *Timeless Tradition* through an intimate association with the Presence of God (Spirit). It is within the context of this “Gnosticism” that this essay makes use of the term.

God: I refer to Shaykh Kabir Helminski’s translation: “(W)e must understand that this word ‘God’ has the following synonyms: Reality, The Source of Life, The Most Subtle State of Everything. The love of God is the love of the greatest Truth. This quest concerns Reality not religion. The ‘love of God’ is our essential relationship with what is most real.”⁶³ It is with this “God” in mind that this essay uses the term.

Hermeticism: The preservation of the spiritual interpretation of **alchemy**; as opposed to the pure chemical interpretation which searches for an actual physical ‘elixir’ in order to produce physical/spiritual immortality.

Imaginal: “A level of reality in which ‘meanings’ are embodied as images which have a kind of autonomous existence... It is an “interworld” in which visions, which are simultaneously meanings, are experienced by a psycho-spiritual faculty, the active imagination, or what Sufis would simply call the ‘heart’... This imagination does not construct something unreal, it unveils the hidden reality... The function of this power of the soul is in restoring a space that sacralizes the ephemeral, earthly state of being. It unites the earthly manifestation with its counterpart on the imaginal level, and raises it to incandescence.”⁶⁴ Jung identified this faculty as the “active imagination” (not to be confused with what we generally know as imagination). Henry Corbin (an avid, long-time practitioner of the active imagination, who studied the works of the 12th Century Iranian Hermeticist, Sohrawardi) called this faculty, “*mundus imaginalis*”: “a suprasensory world, insofar as it is not perceptible except by the imaginative perception, and insofar as the events that occur in it cannot be experienced except by the imaginative or imaginant consciousness”. The *mundus imaginalis* is thought to be a highly appropriate platform for archetypal interplay.

Interdependence: A relationship of mutual dependence, characterised by mutual sensitivity, mutual receptivity and mutual vulnerability on the part of all the parts involved. This means that any change to one part of the system leads to, or results from, changes to one or more other parts present within the Whole.

Kabbalah: Translates as, “to receive”. As a conceptual framework, it developed initially from the Jewish mystical text, the *Sefer Yetzirah* (Book of Creation), with some additional imagery coming from the philosophy of Philo of Alexandria. The definitive Kabbalist text, however, remains the 13th Century production, the *Sefer ha-Zohar* (“Book of Splendour”) and it is soon after this time that we first get a glimpse of the Kabbalah manifested as the “Tree-of-life”. The Tree-of-Life, as we know it today (a symbolic/geometric glyph comprising of 10 *Sephiroth* (qualities/realms/stations) and 22 inter-leading Paths), was the result of collaboration between Jewish scholars and Moor Sufis while living in exile in Spain. The Kabbalah is utilised as a framework for understanding and connecting with mystery of Life, Soul and God. Alternative spellings and connotations are encountered in the (Christianised) *Cabalah* and the (Universal) *Qabalah*.

Kataragama: A sacred location in Sri Lanka, believed to be the home of Hindu god Skanda-Kumara (Skanda-Murukan). Through observation of the cult’s ritual and devotional ceremonies, there is the belief that Skanda embodies the same archetype as represented by Dionysus in Greek mythology.

Monochord: An acoustic device simply constructed with a single string drawn across two ‘bridges’ and a soundboard with a moveable bridge for dividing the string length. Designed by Pythagoras, it demonstrates the natural harmonic scale with its underlying mathematical principles. The most harmonic note of the ‘fingered’ scale lies in the 2:1 octave position

(i.e. $\frac{1}{2}$ of the total string length and therefore in the middle of the monochord) and is therefore the same note, albeit higher-pitched, as the open (unfingered) string.

Philosopher's Stone: The transformative Agent, and sometimes symbolic of the 'goal', of the Alchemist's/Hermeticist's search.

Sanskrit: An ancient (east) Indian language.

Sheela-na-gig: A cross-cultural (probably Neolithic) sculpture showing a naked 'woman' gloriously exposing her vulva to the observer. This can be linked, conceptually, to the Egyptian *Ru* hieroglyph, which bears the same shape as that of a leaf, flame, almond and the *vesica piscis* etc.

Sufi: A sometimes contentious term attributed to a person who works within the framework of mystical Islam (*Tasawuf*). Sufi spiritual work centres on the fulfilment of the 'Human' condition (as anchored in the trans-egoic essential Self/Being), as opposed to inculcating supernormal faculties, which may or may not be encountered in the process. As such, the Islam of Mohammed is considered central to Sufism.

Trans-egoic: This does not imply a complete disintegration of the ego, but rather the complete *transformation* of the ego into a "container" (i.e. the essential Self [*nafs al-mulhama/nafs al-kamilah*]) suitable for reflecting "Spirit" (i.e. responding to the True).

Tree-of-life: Symbolic of the World Soul (Anima Mundi).

Yoga: Refers to the *discipline* of traditional Indian spiritual practice; the goal of which is divine *Union*. There are many yoga practises, a few examples being Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, Gyani Yoga and Bhakti Yoga etc.

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