

(2022 July 21) Animacy, panpsychism, tantra, shaktism and Whathaveyou: tat tvam asi

Well, as I suppose I knew, un- or subconsciously or somehow, my basic and growing interest in (in these my declining years)

- linguistics, philology, ancient history, prehistory (cultural anthropology)
- community, Digger economics, hierarchy (political theory)
- semantics, poetics, tacit knowledge (communications theory)
- emergence theory, cellular autonomy, autopoiesis, panpsychism (metaphysics)
- animacy, interspecies relation, ecosystem theory (ecology)
- etc

had to bring me back around to my specific interest 50-60 years ago in Indo-European mythology -- mythology in the broad sense of thought patterns, ways of thinking, ways of seeing reality, understanding of what and how existence is/means.

Which is to say, the generalist interest that took me from undergraduate history and philosophy classes and MA literature courses to the UCLA Center for the Study of Comparative Folklore and Mythology where my focus was on I-E goddesses, Celtic goddesses in particular. And, about the same time, brought me into touch with the great hippie appetite for Vedantism (via, especially, Aldous Huxley and Alan Watts with some not-too deep diving into Sri Aurobindo), and Tantrism via, especially, the work of Arthur Avalon (aka Sir John Woodroffe), and in particular his translation and exegesis of seminal texts in his two benchmark volumes, *Shiva-Shakti* and *The Serpent Power*.

While I certainly wasn't immune to the sexual allure of Tantra or the promise of New Age blissfulness in the heyday of sex, drugs and rock and roll, my less carnal and navel-gazing interest was and is more philosophical (or intellectual, or epistemological, or metaphysical, or whatever that abiding interdisciplinary interest is to be designated).

In any case, I find I've come back around (by *commodus vicus*, as it were, prompted most recently by Robin Wall Kimmerer's expounding on animacy in *Braiding Sweetgrass*) to Woodroffe (I never did care for his, I would say disrespectful, *nom de plume*). I've recently re-read (with, I think, some greater understanding, after 60 years or so) his *Hymns to the Goddess* and *Hymn to Kali*, and with more than a little trepidation have ventured again into *The Serpent Power*.

Certainly my interest is not in becoming an adept or devotee in tantric practice, but I do find the conceptual or ideological framework and vocabulary pertinent, and note that the introductory chapters (esp. 1-3) present a not-too jargon-laden discussion of tantric monism that indicates how

it addresses (or subsumes?) the cluster of topics I've suggested above.

A pdf of The Serpent Power is too large to attach, but it can be downloaded at this link

<https://archive.org/details/x-the-serpent-power>

Tat tvam asi    Namaste.