

Tribal Epistemology

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(**Received:** December-2018; **Reviewed:** January-2019; **Accepted:** February-2019;

Availabel Online: February-2019; **Published:** March-2019)



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ABSTRACT

The significance of Epistemology (theory of knowledge) is well known in philosophy. Hardly do we find a philosophical system without epistemology. Almost every major philosophical system has its distinct epistemological and metaphysical theses. Accordingly, if tribal philosophy is to be counted as a major system of philosophy, it is more likely that it has its distinct epistemological and metaphysical theses. In other words, if we can have a tribal epistemology distinguished from the other epistemological systems, then, we can expect to have a tribal philosophical system distinguished from other philosophical systems. To aim at the construction of a new epistemology and new philosophy, namely, tribal epistemology is very ambitious. It demands path-breaking inquiries into both epistemology and tribal culture such that a new epistemology and, along with it, a new system of philosophy can be established. I do not claim of making any such path-breaking inquiries in this work. However, I attempt to defend the idea that there can be a tribal epistemology distinct from other epistemological systems and, hence, do defend the idea of a philosophical system that can be called a tribal system of philosophy or “tribal philosophy”. Neither tribal epistemology nor tribal philosophy has been established as a major area of investigation in philosophy. In this work, I defended the very idea of a tribal epistemology with the objective that further philosophical investigations into the tribal knowledge systems can be fruitfully carried out on a plausible strong theoretical ground.

Keywords: Epistemology; Tribal worldview; Tribal philosophy; Sources of knowledge; Belief system Tradition

INTRODUCTION

The Chambers Dictionary defines “tribe” as a set of people theoretically of common descent; an aggregate of families, forming a community. Numerous authors have given various definitions on the meaning of “tribe”. D.N. Majumdar (1958) defines a tribe as “a collection of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same

language, to observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well-assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations. A tribe is ordinarily an endogamous unit, is a political unit in the sense that the tribal society owns a political organization" (p. 355). A tribe by definition is a group of people belonging to the same race, with the same customs, language, moral and religious precepts, etc., often led by a chief. The members of a particular tribe may have a strong affinity with each other, not only being members of the same socio-cultural order, more so, due to the same biological ancestry. This biological ancestry at once brings forth an intertwined social bond between them.

The term 'tribe' used to mean the primitive or barbarous communities by the colonial masters, conveyed their hatred and lacked objectivity. Evans Pritchard's opinion about the word 'primitive' is worth quoting: "the word 'primitive', in the sense in which it has become established in anthropological literature does not mean that the societies it qualifies are either earlier in time or inferior to other kinds of societies" (Pritchard 1951, p. 7). He further observes, "As far as we know, primitive societies have just as long a history as our own, and while they are less developed than our society in some respects they are often more developed in others" (Pritchard 1951, p. 7). His opinion about the continuance of the term, though undesirable, is this. ".... The word was perhaps an unfortunate choice, but it has now been too widely accepted as technical term to be avoided" (Pritchard 1951, p. 8). Many communities are labeled primitive irrespective of manifold varieties, which they present, in their social organizations and cultural patterns. When we think of the term "primitive" it means that whatever has preceded us is less advanced. Of course, it is true in some respects like for instance, it is true of reading and writing and of technological progress. But in many respects the cultures of those whom we call primitive is more highly developed than are the civilized or advanced cultures. For instance, some communities in African are still been referred to as primitive tribal (Allam 2018; Ben 2018). But their cultural patterns and social structures, economic and ritual life and their cognitive orientations reveal that they are no less generous, hospitable, loving, co-operative, honest, dependable, cheerful and courageous than most of the members of advanced or civilized societies. With the concept of primitive, the idea of static is largely associated. It is taken that the societies and the culture called primitive are almost in a state of equilibrium. In other words, the changes in primitive societies are least and those in civilized societies most. It is needless to say that change is ubiquitous in all human societies. But subject to the environmental conditions and psycho-social orientations, the rate of change found in communities isolated from the mainstream is slower than that in those communities which are exposed to the cultural interchange with other people. The habitat also sets certain limits beyond which the culture can't develop unless radical changes are introduced from outside.

One of the consequences of considering tribes as primitive is the failure to think that they are capable of achievements. In the new strategy for understanding tribal thought, it is appropriate to look critically at the term 'primitive' to consider both its meaning and its implications. The relevance of critical examination of the term 'primitive' in the changing context of tribal societies is twofold. On the one hand, the misconception, which arises out of ortholinear view, has to be wiped out and on the other, once the correct meaning of the term is found out, then it becomes easier to evolve suitable strategies for understanding tribal knowledge system.

'KNOWLEDGE' IN TRIBAL CULTURE AND 'KNOWLEDGE' IN MODERNITY

The mainstream approaches to knowledge or modernity claim that the only genuine knowledge is that which is based on reason. They are of the view that only this kind of

knowledge can lead us to the truth. Thus, for them, other roots of knowledge are spurious or irrational. Sujata Miri opines that this is the main reason why tribal communities are considered primitive or pagan and also barbarous. "The misplaced confidence in the western type of theoretical knowledge as the one and only type of knowledge has left a very limited space to other systems of thought which could be termed rational. The ideal rational understanding is one that moves on the pattern set by the western civilization. This I feel is the primary fact which has led to the evaluation of tribal communities as backward, as pagan and also barbarous" (Miri 2004, pp. 1-2). She questions the veracity of this claim, and opines that we need not refer to western modernity so as to understand tribal thought and practice. From the perspective of modernity, tribal thought is bound to be unscientific, irrational and therefore not to be accepted as true source of knowledge. However, this view need to be contested, which requires a thorough philosophical debate on the conceptual framework, associated with tribal studies. To understand tribal thought and tribal rationality we need to account the complexities of the entire framework of tribal culture(s). The complexities of the framework is mainly made out from the legends, myths, symbols, folklores, poetry etc., which are taken for the vital constituents of a tribal culture. These vital constituents are also couched within the worldview of the tribals. Therefore, an investigation of the whole perspective is necessary. What we are anxious to stress in this work however is that human beings today in contrast to the so called primitive man are mostly seen as an essentially rational species, purposively and reasonably playing in political and social contexts. Those contexts, which we usually class under the general term of "modern civilization", are thought of as being fundamentally rooted in a sound basis of reason, knowledge and science. Modern civilization has devoted itself to rationalism. It insists on keeping its distance from myths, rituals (Nalbantoğlu 1993), or any other 'tribal practices'- which are, rather assigned to some savage people, cultures, and eras far below the modern horizon. Commonly, our civilization deals with those cultures in terms of picturesque and somehow dubious of ethnographic research.

Evolutionary interpretations of the tribal mind may be summarized in such epithetic terms as prelogical, prescientific, irrational, savage mind. A more sympathetic interpretation would allow logical but not scientific understanding of the 'Savage'. For instance, the Khasi method of finding out the cause of sickness by cock-sacrificing ritual may be considered logical but unscientific. Such considerations have led many a scholar to conclude that "the savages are natural philosophers", that "the savage mind puts the philosophy of the finite into practice" (Evans-Pritchard 1935, p. 11), or that the savages too are "rational creatures but their mode of rationality is different from our mode of rationality" (Levi- Strauss 1966, p. 43). An intellectual construct of knowledge of course has not been given a place in tribal culture. However modern scientific thinking- rational, logical, conceptual and abstract thinking- as cognitive part of man cannot decrease the space of the unknown, the infinite. For, man's faculty is limited and regressive. The only tool of grasping the unknowable, which is available to man, is the ritual. Hence, the Khasi cock-sacrificing ritual is not only logical but also the most perfect way of knowing the unknowable cause of sickness. The only language in which the unthinkable, and the unknowable, can only be thought and spoken of, even partly, is the symbolic language of the sacred myth. In the tribal thought structure, myth is more intelligible and acceptable than any other mode of knowing the reality. Oral tradition is a means by which people transmit cultural knowledge. Culture is generally transmitted from generation to generation through stories, myths, and reenactments of rituals and ceremonies. A common form of oral tradition is narrating 'the' story. Story telling is an art passed down from one generation to another. One of the main purposes of these stories is to reflect upon 'traditional' values of the past in order to make sense of the moral changes of the present. A significant part of the oral tradition

comprises origin myths. Classical cultural evolutionists maintained that such components of 'primitive ideas' should be identified with mythological thought.

THE ROLE OF MYTH IN TRIBAL EPISTEMOLOGY

Bronislaw Malinowski and Franz Boas (1948) argue that preliterate cultures need not be classified in a demeaning way. Malinowski suggested that myth, like religion, fulfils a universal human need for unraveling the unexplainable phenomena. A myth is a mode of thought essential for supplementing the scientific way of thinking. Eventually, as science advances, the role of myth gets restricted to validating or legitimizing cultural beliefs and practices, rather than explaining the natural phenomena. Myth is closely related to religious faith and is still an indispensable part of modern civilized life itself. Boas, unlike Malinowski, maintains that myths have an explanatory function. In his view, myths should be taken seriously because they deal with the most fundamental aspect of 'native' life, such as their beliefs as to the nature and origin of their world. Claude Lévi-Strauss, particularly noted for his structural analysis of mythology, considered myth as both historically specific and ahistorical. Because, myth is almost always set in some time frame 'long ago', and, at the same time, the narrative is 'timeless'. Lévi-Strauss brushed aside the individuality of the text of myths in favour of looking at patterns, systems and structures contained therein. He emphasized the idea that structures are universal and, hence, timeless. This paradigm fitted in neatly with what the 'traditional' people believed: that the events described in their myths took place at the dawn of creation. They viewed the world as a unified creation whose characteristic patterns did not vary through time. In other words, mythic thought does not recognize a continuing process of change over time (Lévi-Strauss et al., 2016). Their real time is projected into mythic time, and the world's recurring patterns - changes in the seasons, changing genealogies of clans, and birth and death- are all considered part of a grand plan layout at the time of creation itself.

Myth narrates in the form of a story, the nature of an experience or awareness of God. Thus, it is said that mythologies are the early teachers of humanity. By analysing myth, we are now beginning to understanding the significance of it in the studies of the archaic and tribal societies. In the tribal societies, myth happens to be the foundation of social and cultural life. Early men viewed happenings as action and explained them in the forms of narratives, in other words, the ancients narrated stories instead of presenting it by an analysis. For instance, when due to certain atmospheric changes rain came and broke a drought the Babylonians would explain it a bird imduged, who intervened and rescued them from drought. It covered the sky black storm clouds of its wings and devoured the Bull of heaven, whose hot breath had scorched the crops (Frankfort 1967). For Mircea Eliade (1967), myth deals with a time altogether different from the times of our experience in the epics, the myth functions as an educational tool held in the highest esteem by a society. We find that the themes of myth are innumerable. The characters are often god and goddesses, sometimes animals, plants, mountains, or rivers. It also tells us about the birth, mating, disease and death, climate and ecological changes. In each case, the myth directly or by implication barks its striving presentation of events to an altogether different time and thereby posits its authority. Myth always narrates something as having really happened - whether it deals with the creation of the world or of the most significant animal, vegetable species, or of any institution. That is why it is an exemplary model for human behaviour concerned with the realities. "A myth becomes a model for the whole world (which is how one thinks of the society one belongs to) and a model for eternity (because it came to pass in *illo tempore* and does not participate in the temporal)" (Turner 1977, p.43).

Myth does not describe what is/ought to be done, it expresses what must be done. For Victor Turner “Myths are liminal phenomena, they are frequently told at a time in a site that is betwixt and between” (Turner 1977, p.45). The word ‘liminal’ comes from the Latin term ‘Limen’ signifying threshold. For Turner (1977), liminality is a cultural manifestation of a community. He believed that the recital of the mythical narratives transmits cultural knowledge. Hence, myth has a liminal character. It is recited only at a specific time and place with most of the myth having a ritual, genetic and critical references. Mythical narratives, like folk stories, generally travel easily from one group of people to another. In the process, the myth may change within the same group as well as it is told and retold. A well-known example of the mobility of myth is the ‘Great Flood’ motif that occurs all over the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean including Greece, as well as South-East Asia, and the Americas. Throughout Africa, the ‘Semitic’ or Biblical motifs of the ‘Tower of Babel’ and the ‘Parting of the waters’ of the Red sea by a royal leader occur in numerous local versions. Thus, ‘creative play’ is the essence of myth-making. Although myth changes and develops it somehow never loses touch with its roots because the experience is about the interconnection between all aspects of life visible and invisible, terrestrial and celestial, human, animal, vegetable, and mineral. Therefore, myth is all-embracing, and cosmic in its range. Because myth is a narrative, many attempts to understand it have focused on its linguistic structure. The most famous proponent of myth as an example of the historical development of language is Friedrich Max Muller. He believed that in the Vedic texts of ancient India the gods and their actions do not represent real beings or events; rather, they are products of a confusion of human language, of an attempt, through sensual and visual images, to give expression to natural phenomena. Of more recent vintage is the structural linguistic model that concentrates on the total meaning of language as an internal logical system. In particular, they examine the relation between two levels of language: the words and content that are actually spoken; and the underlying systematic structure- the grammar, syntax, and other rules of the language. For Claude Levi-Strauss myth represented a special case of linguistic usage, a third level beyond surface narrative and underlying structure. In myth he discovered certain clusters of relationships that, although expressed in the narrative and dramatic content, obey the contention that the same logical form is at work in all languages and cultures, in scientific works and tribal myths alike. The fact that the thought comes from the unthought is borne by the tribal cosmogonic myths. The unmanifest remains unnamed, unqualified, expressed only symbolically in terms of primeval ocean, darkness, or the self-effulgent light. From the water comes the lotus, the symbol of the manifest. The manifest is named and qualified. Hence, all named gods, spirits, men and animals are creatures and creators of the second order. In the tribal perception, none of them is omniscient and omnipotent. The first principle of the universe is: One-and-many. Hence, the tribesmen think of non-duality at all levels of existence. A Sherdukpen tale describes how a woman gave birth to a human child, and then to snake, monkey, tiger, cow and dog. Monkeys in a Nocte story¹⁸ were originally men (Elvin 1968). In a Hrusso tale, a woman turned into an animal to avoid incest with her brother to whom she had forcibly married. A man turns into a tiger, a woman gives birth to twins, of whom one is human and the other a tiger (Elvin 1968). There is a Minyong story of two brothers, one of whom turns into a cat and the other into a tiger. A Wancho story describes how man and tigers exchange their teeth. Animals talk and also often behave like men (Elvin 1968). Indeed, in those early days, there does not seem to have been any real distinction between man, animal and spirit. This is contrary to the modern anthropological interpretation of human understanding in terms of binary opposition. For the Tribesman, man is not unique even in the possession of knowledge. Primordial knowledge came to him from birds and animals. In a Hill Miri story, god sends two birds to the first man and

woman (who were innocent of any knowledge about the facts of life) to people in the world. There an excellent Singpho story describing how the first man learnt to make the pillars of a house from the legs of an elephant, the poles from the body of a snake, the roof from the skeleton of the buffalo, and the thatch from a fish's scales (Elvin 1968). Another tribal myth describes how at a time when all men lived naked, the growing of cotton and the art of weaving was taught to men by the gods, in a dream. The Singphostor/ tells how from the spider, a girl learnt how to weave (Elvin 1968). According to the Wanchos, from the first rat who fell down from the sky man learnt how to cultivate. The Singphos believe that man's knowledge of iron is a gift from goddess Lepchan. Men got fire from various animals. A bird brings water to mankind. Men learnt from birds how to weep. Like men, the gods and spirits are also not unique; the myths about them follow the same pattern. As stated, from the union of an elderly man and a hideous creature were born the god of death, the god of water, the god of rain, the god of lightning, and the god of an earthquake. At first, there was only one man in the whole world. He united with the god Yang's daughter, from her many children, were born. Of the two brothers, one became the ancestor of men and the other the ancestor of the spirits. Following a fight between the two brothers, the sphere of influence of men and spirit was divided. When the land was divided between man and the spirits, the fathers of mankind got the best land from the ancestors of the spirits. The Khasis believe that in the beginning god was walking hand in hand with a man. At that time there was a tree, which served as a ladder to the original sixteen families of human beings for their communication between heaven and earth. The statement that neither man nor god is Unique implies that every creature is an organic part of the cosmos. Nobody reigns supreme; one is only different from the other. Every creature performs the same paradigmatic act of a) creation, b) preservation and c) destruction. The cosmic order is maintained by the harmonious functioning of each one of them

FUNDAMENTAL CONSTITUENTS OF TRIBAL EPISTEMOLOGY

What are the ways of knowing? - by this we do not mean just the content of traditional knowledge, but rather how knowledge is theorized and constructed, encoded, and passed on to the next generation. Our concern in this section, therefore, is not with what anthropologies/sociologists have said, interpreted or constructed regarding tribal cultures and traditional knowledge systems. Instead, we are concerned with how the tribal use native epistemologies to construct and theorize knowledge. Although much has been published about tribal knowledge systems, nothing specifically about epistemology has been done other than the recording or reconstructing or reinterpreting of culture, knowledge, and so forth. As Moser, Mulder, and Trout have argued, "knowledge, of course, is not the same as a theory of knowledge, just as a mind is not the same as a theory of the mind, a psychology" (Moser et al., 1998, p. 11). Recording an account or interpreting some aspect of a culture is not the same as examining a people's epistemology. The epistemological question, rather is, how is that body of knowledge people call traditional knowledge put together? How is it theorized? More generally, how is knowledge of any kind theorized, created, reformulated, and encoded through a people's epistemology. It is fundamental to tribal epistemology that it is a people's epistemology rather than an epistemology carved out of some preconceived ideas of rationality, truth and justification. Social epistemologists such as Steve fuller and feminist epistemology such as Lynn Nelson recognize with the sociologists of knowledge that epistemological agents are communities rather than individuals (Calvert-Minor 2011). In other words, communities - epistemological communities - rather than collections of independently knowing individuals construct knowledge, and that such communities are epistemologically before individuals who

know (Eichler 2019). When outside researchers, including anthropologists, write ethnographic accounts of other people's knowledge (s), or construct theories of other people's cultures, they certainly constitute an epistemological community. But it is not the epistemological community that created the knowledge they are theorizing. In other words, anthropological theories of other people's cultures are not indigenous theories of those cultures even though they may be based on interviews with and observations of indigenous communities, individuals and societies. All of the foregoing activities, while they draw on indigenous cultural knowledge, are imagined, conceptualized, and carried out within the theoretical and methodological framework of western forms of research, reasoning and interpreting.

The concept of tribal epistemology distinguishes between these outsider theories and accounts of other people's knowledge, on the one hand, and cultural insiders' ways of theorizing knowledge, on the other. By tribal epistemology, social scientists mean a cultural group's ways of thinking and of creating, reformulating, and theorizing about knowledge via traditional discourses and media of communication, anchoring the truth of the discourse in culture. From the tribal standpoint, the ways of creating knowledge are parts of the mosaic of cultural knowledge that includes the whole person, family, kin group, and society. As a concept, tribal epistemology focuses on the process through which knowledge is constructed and validated by a cultural group, and the role of that process in shaping the thoughts and actions. It assumes all epistemological systems to be socially constructed and informed through sociopolitical, economic, and historical context and processes. It also recognizes that culture is variable, an ongoing conversation embodying conflict and change, shaped by the dialectic of structure and agency, inherently ideological, and prone to manipulation and distortion by powerful Interests. What is the relationship between culture and tribal epistemology? From an indigenous perspective, culture embraces culture, tradition, norms and modes of behavior; ways of thinking, doing, and creating; and, of course, as discussed in stories and myths. Anything born of the land and passed what is the relationship between culture and tribal epistemology? From an indigenous perspective, culture embraces culture, tradition, norms and modes of behavior; ways of thinking, doing, and creating; and, of course, as discussed in stories and myths. Anything born of the land and passed from generation to generation is part of the culture. We will not go into this issue in detail here, as it has already been the subject of much debate. All knowledge is subjective knowledge in the tribal world. There can be no detachment of the knower from the known as in mainstream epistemology, as exemplified in logical positivism with its focus on "objective knowledge," especially Karl Popper's concept of "knowledge without a knower" (Buck 2017). Thus, the scientific notion of objectivity as classically defined in positivism does not exist in tribal knowledge. To the tribals communities of knowledge-makers socially construct knowledge. In the past, when they spent time at the 'girls' dormitory', women occupied much of their discussing, (re)constructing, and sharing knowledge, and men did the same in the *morung* 'men's house'. Today as in the past, village meetings and teaching, counseling' sessions are spaces where knowledge communities meet and do their epistemological work.

Based on the findings of second-generation cognitive science and their previous work on metaphor, George Lakoff et al., (1999) have argued, as did Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964), for the primacy of perception: that is, human beings know the world primarily through their bodily senses. This use of the body to know the world is an epistemological universal. It is not surprising; therefore, that sensory information is privileged among the sources of information from which the tribal construct knowledge. People often question the reliability of their and others' senses III making truth claims. While sensory information is universal, however, the interpretations of what such information conveys tend to vary across epistemological

communities. The tribals regard the whole body as knowing and as an organ of C knowledge creation, similar to Merleau-Ponty's notion of the embodiment of perception (Dreyfus 1996). The embodied senses are: see, hear, touch, smell, taste, and feel in the body. There are five kinds of seeing: physical seeing with the eyes; seeing with the mind (eg, insight, foresight); seeing the unseen or invisible (eg, spirits), a gift or ability that extends the physical and temporal boundaries of physical seeing; seeing a person walk by in a flash that no one else sees, as a communication of something to happen; and seeing in a dream. Another kind of seeing involves seeing something (eg, the nature of an illness, the outcome of an event, the image or shadow of a person) through a medium. For instance, the Khasi's make a divine consultation through the medium of an egg, or a fowl, or any other animal judging the divine response from the signs that he asks for like, the sacrifice for a sick person is done with a cock-sacrificing ritual, after ripping open the intestines to find out the answer, the performer asks the god to give the cause of sickness. From the position of the intestine the signs are read and the cause is found. This having been done, god's grace for the recovery of the patient is asked and a word of satisfaction from god comes forth (Roy 1936). This kind of seeing is known to traditional healers. Oral tradition not only transmits cultural knowledge, it is a source from which new knowledge can be created through expansion or deletion, because it is received knowledge that has been tested through everyday life or trial-and-error experimentation, and is capable of further improvement. Usually the improvement or expansion is context-bound, that is, tied to the immediate circumstances of changed conditions such that further experimentation is required. The rate of expansion in many areas of oral tradition has increased today due to the need to invent solutions as tribal towns experience rapid environmental decline because of logging, overpopulation, and other ecological processes forcing a rapid adjustment in forms of house-building, cooking, planting, and the like. Two other sources of knowledge in tribal epistemology are a direct communication from the ancestors, and Signs. The ancestors (counting backward in time from one's grandparents) may communicate in dreams, trance, or unexpected phenomena interpreted as messages from them. For example, in psychic dreaming: predicts a future reality and may come from an ancestral spirit or recently dead relative.

Signs can be from an ancestor or a recently dead relative but generally come from unspecified sources, such as nature or an unknown spirit. Signs can be created or events caused by living people who have 'intrinsic power, efficacy' within themselves, which allows them to make things happen separately from sorcery. Interestingly even the converted (to Christianity) tribals receive signs of the Christian God, although if so, the tribals do not regard them as involved in the construction of knowledge via tribal epistemology. They are careful to keep distinct what comes from Christianity or God and what comes from their indigenous culture. Spaces in which much of the justified truth process takes place are village meetings, including those that deal with disputes or constitute themselves as village courts; ordinary information social gatherings such as marriage feasts and wakes/funerals. Questions posed include, where did you hear it? Who did you hear it from? Did you see it with your own eyes/ touch it! taste it! eat it /sniff it etc? Did you try it (to see if it worked, to ascertain its nature, etc)? Does this make sense in terms of everyday life experiences including our oral tradition? Other groups' knowledge may also be given as evidence, as in "In village X, people have done this and their experience has been Z"; or "they (specified) have been doing this for a long time and we are just arriving at it now". With regard to forms of body feeling, signs, and intuitions, the consistency in similar instances increases the confidence with which one uses these more subtle forms of evidence to justify an interpretation or construction.

CONCLUSION

Let us note in conclusion that to understand how the tribal perceive knowledge and its function, it is necessary to understand their concept of the world in which they lived. This is a fundamental consideration because primary facets of the universe, as perceived by tribals establish this cultural group in diametric opposition to the culture of the mainstream i.e. the westerners. For the tribals, all of reality, including the physical and spiritual realms are connected and act purposefully to guide each other in the path of life. From ancient times, they learned that living things, including the animals, the plants and all of the elements that brought forth life, were infused with a spirit and were gifts from the creator. Indeed, this holistic existence extended beyond the known physical world and the spiritual and physical realities are so intermeshed that living things transcend the boundary. In this network of life, all were to live in harmony and nothing existed by chance. To respect and balance each life was not an easy task but required the rigorous work of passing on to each succeeding generation valuable lessons about how to be a guardian of the world they, in time, would pass on to others.

The tribal people are deeply spiritual and through visions, dreams, and prayers tribal people learn that the creator provides life-giving lessons. For tribal people, knowledge is never questioned and life's experiences affirm and compound ancient teachings and the propositions about how to lead a good life (Cox 2020). The tribal people believe that life is not by chance, and may best represent this philosophy through their perception of the creator, the provider of life, and the world in which they reside within the model of the tribal. It is believed that the creator could be our mother, or our grandfather or grandmother. The creator could be our friend too. The creator helps us along the journey of life and is not bound by physical form. The creator can take the form of any animal to become a helper. Clearly, the world the tribal people have come to know is widely different from that conceived by the western.

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