

Field Notes by Donna Runnalls, President, LBF Oct 29, 2011, Riobamba , Ecuador

In October 2011, while visiting the community of Agua Santa , Ecuador and the family of Juan Patricio Pilco, I had an opportunity to speak with Patricio about some of the knowledge he had received from the Abuelos or Grandparents of his community.

Patricio explained that from an early age he had spoken with many of the grandparents. Many of them felt sad about the changes happening in their communities and especially among many of the youth. For the past generations, the people have been affected and influenced by the many forces of modernization and technology to abandon their old practices, traditions, beliefs and knowledge (ex knowledge about Permaculture) of their culture. While this is a well-know phenomenon world-wide in indigenous communities, it cannot be taken for granted that people will re-value the great wisdom of their traditions. It is usually due to the vision, work and determination of young people like Patricio, that the older individuals again feel confident to bring forward all they know, and the young people feel inspired to value and reinstate the wisdom in their lives. In Agua Santa, the Pilco family is leading the way in restoring the traditions of permaculture to the families of the area by transforming their own farm slowly in this direction. Patricio now spends much of his time, as funded by a non-profit organization, in going around to communities and giving inspirational talks to everyone who will attend. In this way, he also speaks about the effects of climate change and environmental devastation, and the need for reforestation. What follows is a small part of the teachings Patricio shares:

Andean Cosmvision ,“Wisdom from the Abuelos”, as received by Donna Runnalls from Patricio Hipo Pilco, Director, Dressing the Mountains in Green Project. Agua Santa , Ecuador

Donna: Please share with us some of the messages and teachings you are now sharing in your talks with the communities in this large Region of Katcha.

“Wisdom from the Abuelos”

Patricio: The Ancient Ones knew well that the Earth is our Mother, Pachamama. We must live in Harmony and Balance with her. We must follow her example, and see how she does things. In the Andes , a man and woman, a married couple, are thought to be a “Runa”, a balance of Male and Female. Together they make One. They make Wholeness. They must always be mindful of keeping this balance. In this same way, on a bigger level we must always be mindful of keeping a balance with Mother Earth. The people of the Andes must help by remembering the value of their culture and return to its ways, its wisdom. They must remember the rituals for planting, the rites which are held during each season, the traditional clothing, the music and especially of their native language. Do not forget our language of Quechua, inside the language is much information and many teachings.

We must return to regard for our Pachamama, our Earthly Mother. When a woman has a child she cares for her child. This is natural. The child appreciates the Mother, is grateful to the Mother. In this same way, Mother Earth is our Mother. She gives us crops and food and life and takes care of us. We must return to appreciating her, thanking her for what she gives us. In the Christian tradition, there is a cross symbol. It is not only a cross which goes up and down from Heaven to Earth vertically. In the ancient teachings it is also a horizontal cross. It is a cross which balances Earth and the Heavens. The lines are equal. We must restore this model, Heaven and Earth together. An Ancient One could go onto a piece of land and immediately tell how to balance that land with the higher Universal energies. Also, every person has a dream. For one person they might dream of owning a car, another of owning a home, another of education for their children, for Patricio (he says with a big smile), of dressing all the mountains in green! In order to live in balance with this wish, each person must have a model, like a drawing, a design which they can even picture, which contains of all the parts of their life. They must see it as a design in which all the parts of their life are attended to equally, balanced equally. Nothing is left out. In order to achieve our dreams and live well we must also have all parts of our life in balance. This is true in the same way for a community. For example, Agua Santa. The community dreams of having enough water, but we must find ways to consider all the needs of all the people as we find a good model for distributing the water, for utilizing the water. We must learn to imitate the model of Mother Nature and how she does things in this same way. Also, the people must now take their lives back into their own hands. We must see that the technical people represent only one half. We must return to knowing how the ancient ones grew their crops and bring this teaching back, bring it out. Then, on the same plane (a horizontal gesture with his hand) we must share equally, value equally, not put one part higher or lower than the other. Now is the time to do all this. Now is the time to act. We must all unite, work together, become as One again, on behalf of the Earth.