



Indigenous Intelligence, by Satish Kumar

My mother used to tell me a Jain story when I was a child:

Adam was lost in the jungle, and there he encountered two wild elephants. They began to chase him. In order to escape from these frightening beasts Adam climbed a tall tree nearby, but the elephants were not going to let him go so easily: they curled their trunks around the tree and began to shake it furiously. It so happened that above the branch Adam was holding was a beehive. As the tree shook, honey began to drip down, straight into Adam's mouth.

At that very moment some angels in their chariot were flying past and upon seeing Adam's desperate plight they slowed down and said, "Come, we will rescue you. Come into our chariot."

"Oh, how kind of you," replied Adam. "But please, let me have this sweet drop of honey, and then I will come."

The angels were kind and patient, and so they waited. "All right," they said. "You got your honey drop! Come now -- be quick."

"Please, let me have just one more drop," pleaded Adam.

The angels were astonished. They said, "You are being stung by bees and any time now the elephants will pull the tree down. You greedy fool, you cannot let go of the desire for that drop of honey! Come, this is your last chance. Come now, or we will go."

"Please, please, let me have one more drop of honey," said Adam. "It is so delicious."

The angels waited for a little while longer but in the end they could not draw Adam away from his imminent death, and they left.

The indigenous people are the angels of our time. They are calling on us to refrain from the momentary gratification of economic growth, which is like the drop of honey. The planet is threatened by global warming, rivers are polluted, rainforests are disappearing, the human population is exploding, biodiversity is diminishing, and traditional cultures are declining -- all this in the pursuit of economic growth, so that we can have the sweet drop of consumption.

--Satish Kumar, in *_Dance of Diversity_*
[<http://resurgence.org/magazine/article2588-Dance-of-Diversity.html>]

