

Sounding Bowls

Opening Hearts Across the World

by Tobias Kaye: Designer and sole maker worldwide

Meditating on Trees.

Trees bridge the earth and the sky. Their being is drawn from the stars and their body from the air and earth. I will offer a few technical details: Their leaves spread out into the air drawing in the carbon compounds exhaled by animal and human beings and our makings. From these carbons and from the mineral rich water drawn up through their deep roots trees form their body. It is a remarkable fact that trees use the substance of the air to create the solid substance of their body whereas we humans take up the substance of the earth in our work and for our food and give it new forms through our thinking, feeling and doing. It is not normally realised that trees grow out of the air into the earth once their first leaves have emerged from the seed.

In each leaf a tree performs miracles of chemical engineering that we, with all our science cannot replicate. The simplest of these, photosynthesis uses light to create solid substance out of air, the more complex of these create compounds we do not yet understand as well as many that we highly value. For example Aspirin from willow trees, Quinine from Cinchona tree (without which there would have been no British Empire) Taxol (an anti Cancer drug) from the Yew tree, Vitamin C from the white pine tree and so on. These compounds travel down the tree in the under-bark, protected by the harder over-bark and feed the Cambium Layer. The cambium layer is a major invisible miracle; Only one cell thick it is the only part of a tree that is technically living, the only part that is growing and reproducing cells. The wood of the tree, like the bark is made by the cambium layer. These have their essential function within the tree but they no longer grow once made. Day by day, season by season the cambium layer grows trees. Each leaf, flower and fruit on a tree has a kind of miniature root into this miracle layer of the tree. The sap, drawn in by the roots rises up through the outer layers of the wood feeding the Cambium layer as it passes and flows out into the leaves where it transforms, by these not-yet-understood processes into the remarkable compounds that flow down in the under-bark from where it feeds the cambium layer anew.

Trees grow towards the light and warmth of the sun, whose generous love enables all life on earth. Their sap flows in the spring and summer into all their wood. In the autumn it recedes, leaving the tree a quiet period through the winter before the spring growth begins again. The sap also follows a monthly rhythm following the moons cycle though not much is known about that yet. (Recent research has shown that trees felled in the right quarter of the moon do not rot, split, or succumb to insect boring as much as trees felled out of cycle.)

The sap also follows a daily cycle with peak and mean flow times at 4am and 4pm.

Trees also respond to star movements. Recent research by geometricians working with growth patterns has shown that bud growth cycles coincide with planetary movements and conjunctions. Different trees respond to different planets. Oak bud growth rhythms follow the movements of Mars, Cherry flower buds respond to Venus and their fruits, like apple and pear to Moon rhythms, Sycamore leaf buds respond to Jupiter and Ash to the Sun, while beech and

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Hornbeam along with most needle leafed trees move with Saturn. Rudolf Steiner's Bio-Dynamic (B-D) growing methods include planting and tending in time with these cycles. Trees treated thus have been shown to be far less susceptible to environmental poisons: huge areas of the Black Forest in Germany, devastated by acid rain are being regenerated with B-D trees. Thus we can see that while trees are purifying the air they are also building up their being from the starry realms, a record of huge stella events, supernovae etc can sometimes be found in tree rings. The action of trees in bridging earth and heaven is complementary to our own and we have much to learn from them.

Trees enable other life forms to flourish by drawing up deep ground water, their shade and humus protect and feed, their cool presence causes the rain to fall and their spirit has inspired human culture from as far back as we can trace. The earliest known epics refer to the power of the forests and the earliest known small poem refers to the Hawthorn as the gateway to Spirit Land.

Trees relate to the whole planet: their electrical polarity, fluctuating over the diurnal rhythm creates a magnetic field that sustains the earth's own field. Larger areas of deforestation show a clear weakening of the magnetic flux and complexity in that area since clearing began. Forest clearing is not a new thing, though it has accelerated. As far back as we can trace cultures have expanded by forest clearance, funding wars with timber sales, building fleets, forts and towns with timber cutting, this is part of the relationship between trees and us that needs our attention.

Trees are brother/sister beings to us humans. Their immense patience needs to be rewarded with love and joy. Their gifts to us shall be repaid in the future by our supporting their own development, but for today it is a step that we accept their wisdom and learn from them. Taking "Tree" into one's meditation is a helpful step for us and for all trees. I hope the insights into Tree's patterns of life above are helpful to you for doing that.

Meditating with tree energy.

A simple, grounding exercise can be done by standing still, possibly under a tree, but anywhere really, then:-

a, Coming to one's own centre of peace (touching-with-awareness the eternal flame from which our personality flows); if you are not easily aware of this centre remember that we flow from life to life re-creating ourselves anew from this centre each time, taking on our karma from the knowledge that this centre remains inviolate, it is the cord (chord) of the Creator who is us within us.

b, Feeling one's body bathed in a flow from over one's head, down all one's body and out through the feet into the earth below like the sap that flows from all the leaves down under the bark and through the roots;

c, Being aware of the starlight, the moon's light and the sun's light that flow from above down into one's being, informing, sustaining and creating right down to the sacrum;

And finally d, becoming aware of the sphere around one's body like the peace that is felt around a tree, each being is a universe and all that is around us is also within us. The sphere around our body is a cell (fractal) of the whole universe; the skin of the sphere is an impermeable membrane and also a sense organ offering mutual protection and communication with all around us.

A longer meditation with Tree can be done by going through the yearly cycle of a tree. Here are some suggestions:

Imagine you have roots deep down drawing up the old, quiet ground water; spreading and growing into the soil, parting rocks, seeking more water, more rooting strength to hold up your body; imagine your sap beginning to rise from sleep in February, filling up inner spaces; imagine the flow up in the wood and down under the bark commencing once the sap is up; imagine buds beginning to swell; the tickle of the starlight, the sap-lifting power of the moon's cycles, the warming touch of the sun's love; leaves spreading out; flowers bursting forth, the buzz of bees; a day begins, birds sing in one's branches, animal activity around one, sunrise, human activity around one, (both those passing with full mind and those with a caring touch); the cool of morning supports the rising sap, the light of day fills one's leaves as the flow of transformation continues, the warmth of noon draws out the flowers, lazy afternoon heat, the beauty of evening, sunset, all without moving around, all observed in utter stillness, the dark of night, human activity lessens, ends, night creatures rustle around, dig amongst one's roots, sleep in one's branches, the midnight moon moves on and one's sap begins to rise again; as the weeks pass flowers die and fall, fruit begins to swell, leaves harden and clog with air-borne dirt, frost crackles in the night, leaves burn in peaceful glory, fruit falls, maybe swirling away in the wind, maybe feeding animal, bird or human; the rise and fall of sap slows, the activity within lessens, ceases; then comes autumn with winds that thrash and crack one's branches, swaying one's whole being, tearing at one's roots, threaten to tear off a branch or even throw one right over. The roots pull at their grip in the ground, loosening, but holding; Autumn now

turns to winter, snow covers ones stillness, frost makes one rimy and sparkle; February comes, the sap stirs, the roots stretch out, filling and growing into the crevices opened by autumn storms, trauma has made way for new life, new growth, the tender buds swell; the young tree grows year by year, the old tree holds the centuries that pass.

A simple exercise, even as you are walking along is to feel that you have roots, deep like a tree. Each step lifts these roots through the soil, each footfall allows them to grow down into the earth again connecting with the their basis.

Plant life generally, trees especially can often take on a particular caring role for human social activity. They benefit from the caring presence of humans and can transform the difficulties that human social groups go through rather like they transform what we breath out into fruits and wood (carbon dioxide into sequestered hydro-carbons) I have even "spoken with" old churchyard yews that have seemed to tell me how they have been hollowed out by trying to change the sorrows of difficult human relationships around them into positive healing patterns.

May your heart felt thoughts be blessed.