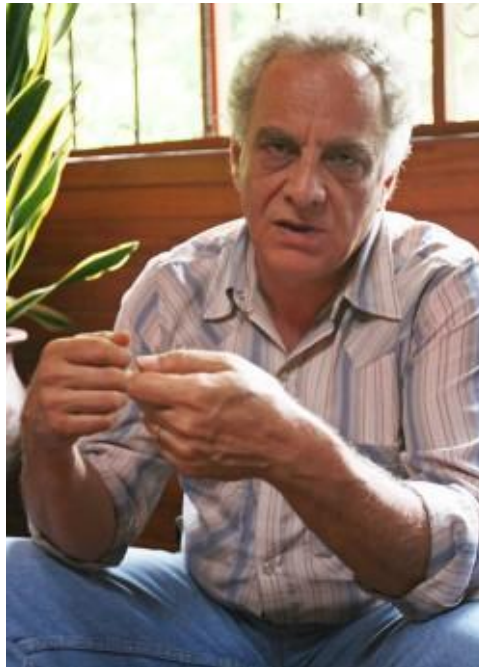


Chakaruna, a vital encounter between Andean-Amazonian and Western tradition¹

Interview with Dr. Jacques Mabit,
Founder of the Center for the Rehabilitation of Drug Addicts and Research on
Traditional Medicines - Takiwasi², Tarapoto, San Martín,
by Ricardo Chirinos Portocarrero, February 2014.



Jacques Mabit en el Centro Takiwasi

- **Jacques, we would like you to tell us a little about your life. How did you come to Peru, what was the relationship between your profession and your arrival in our country?**

Well, I'm a French medical doctor, although now I have Peruvian nationality. I arrived in Peru in 1980 to work in a health center in the small town of Lampa, near Puno, in the Highlands, thanks to an agreement that existed at the time between France and Peru. There we worked with very few medical and economic resources and since we didn't want to use resources from outside and create a discrepancy with the Peruvian doctors that would come after us, we resorted to local resources. That means that we asked for help to the local midwife, the bonesetter, the local people who had knowledge in traditional medicinal plants and practices. In addition, people were accepting that, it was part of their culture, it was cheap and finally effective, even in cases where modern medicine had limitations. When we began to investigate among those who practiced this traditional Andean medicine, the explanations they gave us did not fit into our medical training. A healer told

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² www.takiwasi.com

me that in a dream he was spoken to, a woman said that a lightning struck her and she woke up healed and knowing of medicines, and things like that. However, I also observed that a real knowledge corresponded to that, with evident and real effectiveness, although I could not explain it rationally, and I wondered if it was suggestion, a cultural, psychological phenomena, or if it was something authentically spiritual.

- **Those questions motivated you to approach plants medicine?**

Yes, this later encouraged me to propose a research project. I always had an interest in developing a medicine as simple and effective as possible. It's better if you can cure with a glass of water and not with a huge hospital that costs a lot of money and requires complicate technology. I prefer elementary logistics and good results. My intention was to know more about that medicine, but from the inside. Although there were anthropological or ethnological reports, I did not find in them medical coherence: the anthropologists did not indicate the diagnosis, they could not evaluate the clinical dimension, they only reported what the *curandero* said "this man has *mal aire* (bad air), he came, they blew on him tobacco smoke and now he feels better". But what is "bad air" in the western terminology? Does it exist? Why was he cured with tobacco smoke? Finding a common language meant opening up to unknown elements of an energetic, spiritual type, because the classic-rational approach tells us that this does not exist, that it is a suggestion and that's it. All this brought me to Tarapoto, in the Amazonian piedmont, an interesting area because it is in between the Andean and the Amazonian world, where there is a great tradition of *curanderismo*. There I discovered the plants. I didn't come to study ayahuasca, it was on my way. Many healers learned by using that and many other plants, the *vegetales*, the *palos* as they are called. But when I asked how do they learn? where does their knowledge come from? Thinking that they were going to say from their parents, their grandparents, it's wasn't like that. They always answered that the plants were teaching them directly. They talked to them, they communicated with them. What did that mean? Could the plant also talk to me? Yes, they answered, but I had to drink it, follow a diet and a whole corpus of knowledge and rules, in which they were specialists. I wanted to learn, so I decided to experiment without complaining. If I'd to go with my rational analytic, Cartesian side, I would have preferred not to stay there. I spent six months taking ayahuasca and after that time I stopped everything, I took a distance to see what it was, if I had learned something, if I was healthier or "crazier".

- **And until that first stop, what did you experience?**

Well, it all started in my second ayahuasca session, because in the first one I was very scared and I blocked the experience, I did not experience anything. I had never taken substances, not even marijuana or alcohol. The healer told me "you have to take ayahuasca, if you do not drink you will not understand what it is", because what they explain to you verbally is very limited. If you ask how does the plant heal? they answer you because it is a healing plant, it's its strength! The only thing was to experiment, so I went back two days later for a second session and had an experience, let's say, of initiation. I did not have time to be afraid, I found myself projected into the experience and I could not stop or control anything. At the beginning, it was a terrible thing, I was fighting for hours with a giant boa that enveloped me and took me to bottomless chasms, in a tremendous darkness, I was very scared. Physically I did not move, I realized later, but inwardly I was in hell and fought to save my life and could not, the boa dominated me. I realized that I was going to die and my first reaction was of anger at having taken this toxic brew that was only for indigenous people. All my fears, my anxieties, appeared. Then I began to accept that I was going to die, that it was my time already and I did not even think of calling the healer to ask for help. Everything was so inside me, I visualized my death, the repercussions on my family,

my environment. But little by little I realized that the next day the whole city was going to wake up the same, indifferent to the fact. Maybe something would come out in the newspaper, but it would not stop anyone from following their daily life. My death was finally nothing, I was just another human being, right? I had a kind of awareness of my lack of importance and I agreed to die. I said to myself "that's how my life was, it's over!" And it was not easy at all. Then that very strong phrase came to me, three times, crossing me as coming both from me and from beyond myself: "Jacques does not matter" and when I finished pronouncing it, Puff! Instantly the boa vanished.

- **Suddenly?**

It disappeared! It released me and I was at the bottom of the abyss, telling myself I'm alive! At the same time I remembered the nightmare I had just experienced. It seemed to last an eternity, it was out of time, and if they tell you at this moment that in 5 minutes you will be better, that seems a true eternity. I said to myself "I will never take such a thing again, it's too much, it's not for a non-indigenous person". But then I started to consider what had happened and to realize how my ego had been built. I began to see all the consequences of that "importance", I made a lot of connections and see the ramifications that this invasive ego had had in my existence until then. I came out of the depths slowly like a diver returning to the surface in stages. And on each level, I realized thousands of things that I had never been able to see or understand about myself, about my life. Terror was gradually replaced by the fascination of that discovery, it was an absolutely incredible medicine, with extraordinary potential. That's why I'm still here. And I was still shaken, but alive, unharmed and the healer, once the session ended, passed by me and said: "You have seen, my medicine is strong, it is only for true warriors". It gave me tremendous pride, I felt recognized. Later I realized that this black boa was the ayahuasca that had dominated me and at the same time represented the fight against my own ego that had "died", in quotes, because it does not die in a single time. But there was a first death, a reduction, and it opened me to a totally different perspective on life, this world of ayahuasca and its healing potential: this medicine went beyond what I had been able to see, perceive or imagine until then. I wanted to learn. I decided to go back.

In the following sessions I began to see how energy was handled. The visions are not like that of a screen, it is an experience, one is inside the screen, as in reality. In my eighth session I saw a dozen characters sitting in front of me, like a jury, I was standing in front of them, they were imposing, they emanated authority, they started talking and they said: "We are the guardian spirits of the jungle", I had no idea that they could exist. They asked me why I was taking ayahuasca and I answered that I wanted to learn this medicine. Then they talked among themselves and then the one in the center told me: "Well, you are authorized to enter this territory but your way will be that"; and at that moment I saw myself healing addicts. It was a complete surprise for me because I had never taken drugs, I was not interested in the subject, I had not had a family history. That later gave me some assurance that it was not an elaboration of mine. After the session I returned to rationality, I asked myself if it was real. For Western thought it is not possible, but how could I have invented such a thing? If I had invented something it would have been different, less demanding, easier. I got scared a certain way, I couldn't see how that was possible and it stuck there. I continued taking ayahuasca, learning with retreats in the jungle, dietas... and I forgot that episode, I was a little relieved because I did not see myself doing that kind of work again. But after three years, in another session, a woman appeared.

- **Three years after having had the first vision?**

Yes, a woman appeared and said: "How are you? Do you want to continue learning?". "Of course," I replied. "Well, do not forget the addicts", she replied. It was a surprise, I thought that was an old story, and I resisted again, "I don't have knowledge of the subject, it's complicated, it's difficult, it's frustrating," I said. And she answered me "You know what? For a baby to be born, there are nine months of gestation and after that, you learn to live by living. There are no trials. You have already had your gestation time, now is the time to do and you will learn by doing". I thought it was such an intelligent and strong response. I knew that it was not auto-suggestion or my elaboration because it went against what I wanted. Then I accepted. And there, as always, appeared the synchronicities that come to confirm the message. The next day I was called by a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst friend of mine who worked in Lima and told me that he had an addicted patient with whom he didn't know what to do, and that psychoanalysis didn't work. He added: "Since you are with healers, maybe you could try the plants, purge him off his drugs". Then again, I came across what I had accepted just a few hours before, and with the challenge of assuming this commitment. Without knowing very well what I was going to do, I said "come and see!". It lasted 3 weeks, the guy drove me crazy because I wasn't ready. I realized that I needed to be organized, have certain conditions, not be alone. It took me three years to put together a project, find funding, find the means, develop a protocol with the plants. So, this site, Takiwasi, appeared to me through the plant. And so there were successive indications, although I always hesitated, I wondered if it was suggestion. The indicated property was not for sale, but through the plant I was told "do not worry, the owner will find you" and that's how it happened. Later they told me that I had to go to Colombia in a specific town to look for a healer to help me and I did not believe it, until I decided that the only thing I could do was go and see; and, boom! I found it just as in the vision it had been shown to me. Thus, things were given little by little, confirming the visions, because it is difficult for a rational Westerner to think that this spiritual world is real, alive and coherent. Finally, in 1992 we were able to open the doors of Takiwasi to receive the first patients.

- **How do you think that this learning could be translated into a language that can be understood by those who do not accept it? Given that speaking directly of the spiritual world is difficult.**

The challenge is to bring together two languages, a symbolic, metaphorical and analogical language, which is used by traditional indigenous groups, who function and express themselves based on the right hemisphere of the brain, and Western linear discourse that uses the resources of the left hemisphere. Fortunately, there is a bridge between the two brains, which is the limbic bridge, which precisely has to do, with humor, encouragement, and coordinates both hemispheres. How to bring closer all this knowledge of the spiritual world, as those experiences and the indigenous people in general suggest it, and my Western Catholic filiation? At the beginning there are certain things that seem totally opposite when seen from the outside, but if you look closely you will find multiple coherences. For example, that first experience with the death of the ego coincides perfectly with the Christian tradition that aims to shed pride and discover that inner voice that knows everything. For thirty-two years I've been on this path of accepting that not only the scientific-objective language accounts for reality, but also the metaphorical-subjective language, and both are necessary and complementary. It is necessary to undertake a kind of oscillation between that metaphorical, analogical language and linear rational language, between thought or the way of conceiving the world from a Western approach and the traditional indigenous world view. In most advanced modern science there are bridges, starting from physics with Einstein's theory of relativity, all pre-relativist thinking that is very difficult to understand, even paranormal data, until cell biology. Different scientific

theories exist that respond to these demands and deserve to be explored, as for example the morphogenetic fields of the English biologist Ruppert Shledrake, fractals, hologram, the chaos theory of Ilya Prigogine, the general semantic of Korzibsky, and so on.

I had the chance to meet a North American professor of quantum physics, from the University of San Diego, Fred Alan Wolf. He came to the Amazon because his son died and for him it had been a drama. According to quantum physics there can be displacements of time and space, parallel universes, and he hoped that through ancestral knowledge he could open a door that would allow him to reconnect with his son. He told me "I want to see him, talk to my son!". It was interesting because it taught me how the theory of quantum physics did not contradict what I told him about my experiences with healers, it was not a proof but it made sense. He then shared his experience of bridge between both traditions in a book called "The Eagle's Quest: A physicist finds a scientific truth at the heart of the shamanic world".

Bridges exist, the human being is one of them, the truth is one of them and there are doors behind the objective world. Scientific objectivity seems to contradict indigenous subjectivity, but the latter has been able to access fine knowledge and produce very sophisticated concrete applications long before Western science... which was very much inspired by it. Based on this knowledge they have been able to elaborate ayahuasca, which is a mixture of two plants, the trunk of the vine with the same name and the leaves of another plant. Not the other way around, or it doesn't work. Then you have to find the exact mixture, the right cooking time to be able to combine the carbolic active ingredients on one side with the tryptamines on the other side in such a way that it works perfectly. This sophisticated mixture can be explained in pharmacological biochemical terms that the Western world recently discovered about 50 years ago. The natives do not call it the same name, they explain it in a more poetic, metaphorical way, but they do know it and use it since 3000 or 4000 years ago. That indigenous subjectivity has discovered things that Western objectivity has only recently learned. And this discovery cannot be accidental, the notion of trial and error is absolutely unlikely. Without mentioning the other elements, randomly combining two precise plants among the 80,000 species of plants found in the jungle has a probability of one by 64 billion... In the same way 40 consecutive operations are needed to obtain the curare, and some of them very toxic. This is done to anesthetize the monkey with the dart of a blowgun in such a way that this poison paralyzes the monkey, but doesn't paralyze who is going to eat it. It is a highly sophisticated preparation with an intradermal injection mode that cannot result from chance in real conditions. This demonstrates high coherence with reality.

When I asked how they knew all this, they told me 'the plant taught me', 'the spirit of the jungle taught me'. They appealed to the 'non-humans', as they say now, intelligent entities that can communicate with the human being, and are found in all the traditions of all the continents. The people of Gabon say that in the river there are mermaids, seductive spirits of water, and the same are found in the Amazon, and even more so when you read a western tradition like The Odyssey, where Ulysses also faces the seduction of the Sirens. And they have the same characteristics, they emit an absolutely sublime sound, that when heard put in a state of ecstasy whose seduction is almost impossible to resist. If the Western tradition says it, the Africans say it, the Amazonians say it, are they all crazy? Though they have the same delirium without knowing each other. Or are they observing the same reality that we discard because it cannot be measured or photographed? To affirm that something doesn't exist is not scientific until it is proven, since the very epistemology of science forces you to base yourself on experience and observe the facts. The block can

be overcome as a coherent language is found that bridges this indigenous knowledge with the Western world.

- **So Western science, in relation to traditional medicine, can be considered "behind schedule"?**

Western science is inscribed within a paradigm, within beliefs, with its axioms, which work very well when it comes to flying an airplane or calculating the direction of the ball that is kicked, but when it comes to consciousness is very short. In Western science there are three levels: the molecular level that corresponds to pharmacological, materialistic medicine, which summarizes Western medicine; a deeper level that is the atomic one, there we are in the field of energy that is consistent with homeopathy, acupuncture and, in general, therapies that have to do with energy and the psyche. There are instruments now to measure these energy issues, but Western medicine is holding back what questions its paradigm and refuses to recognize them; the third level, still deeper, is the subatomic, or quantum, that has to do with consciousness, the spiritual or existential world. This subatomic level transcends the material and psychological level and reaches spiritual dimensions. In 2013 Nobel Prize in physics was awarded to the British Higgs who discovered the "boson" that came to be called "the particle of God", which is quite a symbol. Of course, those levels are not completely separate and there is an interwoven between them with multiple connections. But ordinary Western medicine as we know it in everyday life has remained in a primitive time, is functioning based on concepts that are perhaps the thermodynamics of the nineteenth century, and hasn't even integrated the relativity theory discovered by Einstein in 1905. Machines and technology have integrated it, but this doesn't correspond to the way of thinking and doing medicine. Everything we now know scientifically about how the observer influences the observed, the non-separation of the object and the observer, the illusion of absolute objectivity, the scientific uncertainty, the probabilistic truth, etc., is recognized and practiced by healers and shamans since centuries or millennia ago. We have a Western medicine totally behind schedule even in front of the own knowledge of Western science. Traditional medicine or shamanism, as we call it now, is a space where they are integrated and, in addition, one can experience it, live it on their own flesh, even if the traditional teachers do not formulate it in rational terms but with the metaphorical language of the right hemisphere, with myths, legends, poems.

The resistances are such that sometimes they are linked to a surprising denial. Let's consider for example the energetic body on which certain traditional medicines are supposed to work. While we talk about the physical body, we all agree, but for Western medicine the energetic body does not exist, although there are now technological tools that allow you to photograph, film, visualize, measure it as the Kirlian system or the GVD camera. It stopped being a hypothesis, a supposed belief, and it has become a verifiable and accessible fact to classical science. However, despite this, it still does not enter into consideration of official science and still less in medical practice. This maintains a kind of gap between what we know and can verify, and its integration into a new paradigm.

It is almost impossible for an average Western individual to conceive or conceptualize what is the curvature of time or space-time relativity. Maybe there are about fifty physicists in the world who can. However, when you experience the modified states of consciousness, you do not have to conceive anything, you live it in your own body and you see things from the past, the future and everything is real. This is an important element for the Western world because ancestral knowledge and expertise in the management of these modified states of consciousness are needed, in order to integrate their own scientific knowledge. This

happens through the consciousness, through the individual experience, through the person and its subjectivity, it does not pass through the books, it is an understanding that is not intellectual, conceptual, but from the body, from the own experience, otherwise it would remain as a more or less sophisticated mental elaboration. More and more high-level scientists dare to claim this paradigm shift as those who subscribed the Manifesto for Post-Materialist Science (see <http://opensciences.org/>).



Ayahuasca preparation

- **That sub-atomic level, that level of consciousness, how could it be explained?**

Well, I am not a specialist, I am not a physicist, but there is knowledge about the quantum world. The explanation could be approached from that knowledge, and conversely, that medicine, that advanced science could feed on the ancestral wisdom and its long experience. In a scientific experiment you find only what is put in the initial equations, the variables that are introduced in the research protocol. For example, healers make a preparation with plants and indicate that, in order to be efficient, it is necessary to put it "to appease", which means exposing it all night to moon light. And they tell you, 'now it's more effective'. If a classical molecular analysis were to be made, it would be at night and then the next day in the morning, the same molecules will be found and the molecular scientist will deduce that there is no change and that the healers do not know anything and it is only belief or superstition. But if you go to the energy level and the quantum, and you introduce these variables in your research, maybe you will discover a change at those levels since we know that the spin of the electrons has a rotation that can change by exposure to the radiation of Moon. Only what is sought is found.

If a single healer says it, you can reasonably doubt the claim, but if there is a very long tradition and thousands of healers say the same thing, it is much more reasonable to consider that the truthfulness of that affirmation is highly probable. They are pragmatic people and they look for efficiency and there is no reason to think that they kept for centuries something that does not work. With that they have survived in extreme conditions for centuries. To believe otherwise relieves a kind of thought or a priori or progressive ideology in the end quite racist. It is not from the scientific proof that a fact

becomes real and true. It was true before and it is the Western ignorance that made it consider as false until proven otherwise.

If that is so difficult for relatively observable events as the effects of the moon, when it comes to the interiority of the human being, of the consciousness, the challenge is enormous. The instruments of Western science are very limited in the face of such complex and multifactorial phenomena. For example, scientific experiences, to have some validity, must be reproducible and ascertainable by different research teams. But when it comes to consciousness, an experience in a certain day in a specific place cannot be reproduced *stricto sensu* since another experience will inevitably be realized with other time-space coordinates. This means for example that the moon phase, the cosmic radiations, the electro-magnetic field, etc., will have changed. If it is a matter of consciousness phenomena, the subject will not be in the same conditions of mood, concentration... The energies of the healer who prepares the plants will not be identical. The more sophistication in the object of the research, the harder it is to respond to the usual criteria of classical science. So, we have to go towards a "science of complexity" as proposed by the French philosopher Edgard Morin, invent other methods, other tools to investigate.

- **In some occasions, in the archaeological work that we do in native communities' territories, the inhabitants tell us that dreams showed them about what these sites were, which later were corroborated in reality. This relationship dream-reality seems to be more fluid than you think.**

Well, it's not a classic dream because the word "dream" is commonly applied to someone unconscious and who will wake up later. In this case it is a form of super-consciousness that allows access to other levels of reality, and not limited by the usual space-time dimensions in which we move in daily life and in ordinary consciousness. Perhaps there are exits of the physical body by the astral body or an access to collective memorial records linked to a specific site. When we say "they were shown", it is understood that there was "someone" who intentionally communicated this information and this proposes a revolution in terms of communication with invisible but living and inhabited spaces. This communication with non-humans is the traditional source of indigenous wisdom.

It is not a different reality but different levels of the only reality. It's like a tree, I can look at it as if I were a poet, a biologist, a woodcutter, and everyone will see it from a different perspective, even if it's a single reality. The differentiated approach will allow you to see other things, details, forms that the others don't see. The perception is different according to the observer. To be a bit simplistic I would say that the woodcutter will see the molecular-materialist part, the biologist the atomic energy part and the poet the quantum spiritual part. Everything is there in nature, in our body, as we understand it. We are heirs of our parents, of the ancestors, we belong to lineages and finally to humanity, to life, to the cosmos; that is, we have all the universal memory inside our body in its three dimensions. We are carriers of all those files and we can access those memories that are inside the body as physical, energetic and spiritual reality. For this, we need to perform a work of personal exploration or evolution. This has been explored since immemorial time by ancestral cultures. These memories are also recorded in places, objects, nature. The controlled induction of modified states of consciousness, with or without plants, allows the gradual decipherment of those records.

This is even more true in the archaeological places where there were rituals that activated those three dimensions of reality. But those explorations require a great respect and knowledge of the proper procedures. This is where I believe that the researcher must be

clear in his intentions. What are you looking for? If you just want to get information to be famous, publish a book, earn money or get personal fame, they won't let you through, since there are guards. What is the purpose of your search? What is the purpose of your life? Where are you going? What do you want to learn? What do you want to do this for? Who do you serve? On the other hand, there is a great coherence of life in its different dimensions. Everything, absolutely everything, is governed by the spiritual world, a hierarchical world, with an extremely complex organization that exceeds our capacity for understanding. And you put yourself in there to be guided, and you have to follow guidelines, laws. Therefore, all this type of approach to other dimensions through access to non-ordinary states of consciousness is a coherent ritual practice. One opens a door to another dimension and this cannot be done without caution and protection. The ritual cannot be improvised, it is a kind of technology of the sacred. It is very easy to emerge to another dimension, it is what precisely happens with drugs, one injects himself or smokes and moves to another dimension, but they are not prepared, because they violated the entrance, they go unaccompanied, to steal the information, so how do they return? What do they do with that information? If you are not prepared, instead of enriching yourself from the experience, you become destabilized; if you can't integrate it later in your ordinary life, you disintegrate with physical destruction and psychic explosions as psychotic outbreaks. To play with the spiritual world is to desecrate it and you can pay dearly.

- **Rituality to show respect to that knowledge?**

As in the myth of Prometheus, one steals the fire of the gods and then does not know what to do with it because it bears information with an energetic-emotional-psychic-spiritual charge so strong that the poor guy is totally disintegrated, disturbed. All traditions teach us that learning must be done with respect, order, rigor, honesty. If one does not work on oneself, if one does not purify oneself, one cannot advance. In this science, knowledge cannot be separated from the quality of the subject who exercises it, unlike Western science where one can be a great surgeon for example and, at the same time, a perfect villain with his wife or children without ceasing to be a recognized scientist. It is possible to make this separation, because it is an elementary, molecular, materialistic level. But when you want to enter the level of consciousness, of the spirituality, or the quantum level if you want to call it that, there is no separation. And there, one cannot play, one cannot have a double attitude, or something will go wrong and there will be serious consequences. Traditional medicine is integral, it is not only a science, but a wisdom that requires maturity, purification, cleanliness and respect for the indications that come from the spiritual world, which is transcendental. They will tell you "your way is this", and the other way is not, it's not bad in itself, but that it's not for you and you have to give it up. Do you want to serve or do you want to serve yourself? And serve whom? To God, to life, to the spirit, to what transcends you? If you accept to serve, then they will tell you where and how; and if your desire is sincere, you will do it, but if it's about your personal interests, your sexual desires, your economic appetite, your eagerness for power, things will go wrong because there are guardians that will not allow you to move forward. The access is protected. Then, it is about discovering the whole background of reality, which exists in all traditions, except in the Western tradition of the last centuries that desecrates sacredness. But in the ancient Western tradition it does exist, in the roots of the Judeo-Greek-Christian tradition this wisdom is present. Unfortunately, since the century called "of the lights", we have turned them off, paradoxically, and we have decreed that there was no invisible world or spiritual world. Obscurantism is not where it is said to be.

- **Science without consciousness, is this a contemporary phenomenon?**

An advanced technological activity has been developed, but with a tremendous individual and collective, social disintegration. We all see it every day. A science without consciousness leads to totalitarianism or anarchy. Technological evolution has to go hand in hand with the evolution of consciousness, otherwise it is the road to self-destruction. Traditions have always had different ways of making a path, but always with ritual forms. Rituality makes you touch the door of the invisible world with respect and you will give what you have to give. And one has to humbly accept what is given even though it may seem to surprise or contradict their expectations. In reality, what you are given is the best for you, but sometimes one, for ambition, pretense, ignorance or for different reasons, wants something else. One resists, as happened to me at the beginning, until you accept. In all this, the personal social side, the emotional-psychological and the spiritual side have to work simultaneously, everything has to be coherent. When it happens, for you, archeology can become a sacred science, where you can access knowledge as far as you can. You have had a very interesting experience that raises the veil on the coherences between the drawings, the grid, the accounting, the tambos, the Incas. That begins to clarify and there will be much more to discover. The experience of leaving the body that you told me about is something that many people live, even without taking anything. Our body has many potentialities, but we do not learn to handle them or we have forgotten it. The Western world no longer teaches us, there is no more authentic initiation. The ancient traditions had an early initiation, at puberty, where the skills of each one were seen. There was a preparation for adult life through a rite of passage from childhood to adult life to see the way forward, discover the vocation. In our western society we have eliminated all those valuable tools. Disregarding the spiritual laws, there are no more defenses, protections, guidance. Without decalogue, one manages as best he can, improvising, groping and sometimes messing up. The lesson is hard to learn. Even ayahuasca is used without the corresponding ritual, without proper preparation, and it is a disaster. The problem is not the plant, it is the type of use that is given, who uses it, how, when, with what intention. If a patient does not want to be cured, the plant will not do anything to him. If one comes because he wants to give up drugs but at the same time does not want to open up, exposing his internal secrets, even the most shameful or vile, he blocks the process. If you hide things out of shame or fear, as long as you do not talk, as long as you do not recognize them, the ayahuasca doesn't work. There are guardians of the threshold that allow in only those who are ready. It is a protection because if one reaches that knowledge without being prepared, without the ability to integrate it, they can even go crazy, reach despair until killing oneself or generating some misfortune not only for oneself but also for their own. We need to recover our reason and get out of the transgressive thinking that characterizes our modern society. The science generated by this society is aggressive because it transgresses spiritual laws, ignores them, destroys everything in its path, individual, collective and nature's health. We have forgotten who we are and, in that sense, for me, the Christian tradition to which I belong is also a fundamental door to rediscover these spiritual laws. These laws are universal, they are not contradictory with those of other cultures because there is only one truth. But we must update the knowledge of our own tradition, go back to the origins, take the dust of the centuries, rediscover the essence. There is the deposit of the centuries that generated tiredness, discouragement, where the primal brightness of the Good News was lost. If one stays in contemporary cultural skepticism, a kind of new nihilism, or a puritanical moralist view of religion, that will remain. The essence is in the mysticism, in the mystical evidence, that makes the faith tangible. The saints have discovered extraordinary things, they have lived paranormal phenomena, I would say "shamanic", to provoke a little. Jesus is a savior but also a healer. The Eastern Christian tradition has more fully preserved the embodied dimension of

Christianity. In a general way, all oriental traditions entered into the embodied dimensions of spirituality that has become more conceptual in the Western World. Thus, in the Eastern world the energetic physiologies of the human body have been described with the chakras and the kundalini for example, or in the "American East", the Andean world has in turn recognized the energetic physiology of nature with the importance of mother earth, the hills, the *apus* (mountains).

- **Have you had the opportunity to go to some sacred mountain, an *apu*, and have a deep connection, to perceive its energy?**

No, everyone has their own sensitivity, their own things, that's not my direction, but for example in 2012 I was in Australia and in the middle of the flat desert there is a huge stone called Ayers Rock, or Uluru as the Australian aborigines call it. It is for them like Machu Picchu, an energetic-spiritual center. It is a monolith with about 9 kilometers of circumference and 350 meters high, it is huge. In one slope, that is the feminine one, it has all the forms of a feminine body, with curves and water, and the opposite part is the masculine one, that is vertical, straight, abrupt. When I was there I tried to get in touch with this presence, with the spirits, the energy as they say. Actually, it is not energy but spirits, energy is a spiritual manifestation. The spiritual world is not an energetic world in itself, but a world with beings and energy is its manifestation to our perception. In the masculine side that corresponds to me as a male, I used tobacco, male plant, as I do here, as I learned, as an offering and homage. At this very moment nothing special happened, but at night I dreamed of the spirits of the place that appeared to me in the form of three animals from the Australian desert, including the dingo or wild dog. They asked me for permission to use the tobacco I had offered and I said yes. And they all got excited, happy, in front of an exceptional food. It's a very curious thing because it's a place I didn't know and I'm not from that tradition, but things happened that way.

The exploration of certain sacred sites is not so much my specialty or my sensitivity. With ayahuasca I was repeatedly told to go to certain places that I did not know absolutely, sometimes very far away. For example, I went to Oceania in the Pacific because of visions I had of a small island called Lifou, one of the islands of Loyalty. I had to find a Protestant healer to do a ritual and I found her. On another occasion I was told to go to Syria, in the Muslim world, which surprised me. I was told what I had to find, such a person or such thing. And so it was, the vision was fully confirmed. And there one obeys without understanding because it is something that transcends ordinary reason. You don't know what is being played there before you live it. I had two or three dreams and visions of ayahuasca, with people from the north of India, where I've never been. But my dreams or visions are very clear. I see all the details, the clothes of the people, I hear the music, I perceive the smells and I know, as if it were an evidence, that it is about the north of India. After that, there is always a teaching, a message. We leave usual time-space and access other dimensions. It's something complex and it arises without you wanting it. One is searching, because all that knowledge is largely lost or half hidden. And there the 'I want' doesn't exist. The meaning of these experiences appears later. It is presented when it is the moment, in an unexpected way. They bring a coherence, but not immediate because the logic of the spiritual world does not work as the linear logic of the rational world. In the rational world, you accumulate knowledge, you go to school, to university, you will go forward adding data. But in the spiritual world, the acquisition of knowledge is of another nature, it is more like a kind of puzzle that is being assembled little by little. Suddenly a connection is established, you understand something one day, then something another day, until one day the pieces come together. This approach works with a different, non-linear type of logic. Teachings or visions appear and are put in a way that sometimes you don't

know how to locate. You don't know why, for what, but there they are until they make sense. For example, I once had a dream with a kind of Muslim saint, a man from Pakistan, I never saw him personally. But he appeared like this with all the details. I could paint it, his face, his deep look, and a kind of holiness emanated from him. There was a lot of squatting people around him, like poor, sick, suffering, and he was passing through them and healing them, giving them energy. He started talking to me, he explained things to me, and when he did I saw cartoons, I could figure in drawings what he was saying because he was speaking to me in a language I didn't understand but he appeared to me in a visual way, like a cartoon, and below of each drawing there was a legend in English. Several images appeared, and the rhythm began to accelerate so that I no longer had time to see the image and read the legend and understand what it was about. I notice that I couldn't keep up, it was too fast and my English is not so good. And he told me not to worry, that all of that is going to be stored in a part of me and, when it's time, it will come to consciousness. Therefore, an isolated experience may seem incoherent, as if it were a dream, a madness, but in the long-term coherence appears. I have lived too many things to believe that it is fantasy, I have had visions of places and people that I later knew, things were announced and then discovered.

- **We talk about another type of language and perception of reality.**

It is about another order, another kind of logic, it is like the coherence of a poem, not that of a mathematical equation. It is another type of language, that of the right brain. We have been trained to exercise the left brain that represents rationality, categorization, analysis; but we have not worked on intuition, direct perception, metaphor, then we must relearn, nourishing ourselves from traditions. The great sacred books, the legends, the myths, speak in this metaphorical language. You cannot take the Bible to the letter, it's absurd. When Jesus says that if your eye causes you to sin, take it out, everyone understands that it's metaphorical. You don't have to take your eye out, but you have to stop looking at what does not suit you, not only with the eye but with the thought, the inner eye. It is a teaching through an analog language and not a science book. And the same we can say of all the sacred books that are a source of wisdom. Another source of revelation or teaching is through the nature of the cosmos. The traditions that use plants explored this book of nature. The third source of information or revelation is from our own life, our own body, our experiences and those of human society in general. By observing our life, we learn from our mistakes and our successes. It is about being alert and gradually weaving wisdom into us. These are the three sources of revelation of the invisible world in our reality. There is a sensitive world, manifested and perceptible through the five external senses that allow us to perceive an external reality, in addition to the inner senses that allow us to perceive our body from within, our body schema. These perceptions are drawing what we call ordinary reality. For example, on a visual level, I perceive from the red color to the violet color because it is the natural visual spectrum of the human being. If I take certain special glasses or if I take ayahuasca I will be able to expand the visual spectrum and see more colors, from infra-red to ultra violet. The same in hearing with ultrasound and infrasound that can widen the usual auditory spectrum. So, finally, we have an ordinary perception of reality that is limited by our ordinary perceptions. And we tend to believe that reality is circumscribed to this spectrum. However, when methods of extending perceptions are used, which are technological or through induced sensory alteration, the perceptual spectrum is broadened and some other reality or other dimensions of reality appear in some way. Traditional medicines use plants or develop certain techniques that modify sensory stimulation, either with hyper sensory stimulation (music, rhythms, dances, pain, etc.) or hypo stimulation (isolation, silence, fasting, darkness, etc.) and by that they allow us to see, grasp, perceive things that are usually not perceptible. The consciousness

modification induced in this way does not create anything, it is not about hallucinations, but about putting into evidence what was already here but could not be seen. In the same way that a microscope does not create microbes but the evidence of them through an optical magnification, or as a radio receiver captures invisible waves and makes them audible. It makes visible the invisible world. All traditions tell us that the immediate, sensitive manifestation is governed by a world that is not directly manifest: the invisible world or the spiritual world, if it is to be called that. This unseen world commands and governs this material world. We find this concept for example in the Platonic Ideas or in the forms of anthropology or in the Jungian archetypes. Therefore, there is a similarity between the visible world and the invisible world, and through the analogy procedure one can discover the invisible world from the visible world. Our microcosm gives us to understand what the macrocosm is. It is understandable then the saying "know yourself and you will know the world". The techniques of healers, of traditional medicine, are located precisely in this interface, between the world of sensitive manifestation and the insensitive world. They allow us to pass from one to another, access the invisible world, receive information and then apply it to the visible world both to build Machu Picchu and to heal a person, and in general to respond to human needs, as long as they are oriented towards good, towards harmony, which are objective universal values. That is why rituality is a fundamental part, since it is the door that allows you to go with authorization to the invisible or spiritual world and return safe and sound. Without it, one can be lost in the spiritual world and not find the door to return to that sensitive reality. In addition, in this spiritual world there are positive and benevolent entities and beings, but it is also inhabited by negative energies, malefic entities, evil spirits, demons, devils or whatever they are called.

- **How to protect yourself from these energies, how to distinguish them?**

If one enters the spiritual world without a guide, without knowing where is going or how to do it, one can run into the Adversary; and that is where physical, mental and spiritual health problems arise. The sorcerer or magician is a person who make alliances with these evil entities. Instead of working on himself to get purified, working on his pride, anger, envy, he will try to manipulate the negative forces of the spiritual world for his own interests. Since those entities are hierarchically more powerful than the human being, with cunning and superior evil intelligence, he is manipulated and becomes a slave. The sorcerer is a weak being who wants to save himself the effort of confrontation with the evil in himself, avoid seeing his own shadow, and then subdues, enslaves himself to gain some privileges of a fictitious and not lasting power. Death always awaits him. When ayahuasca is taken without a minimum of knowledge about this reality, there is danger. You have to know who you drink with, with what intention, what ritual is followed, otherwise it can be dangerous. In the same way, if you go to an archaeological site where there are presences, entities and rituals have been performed, you have to know where you are entering because it can be dangerous, you have to go there with protection, guide and respect. There are places that have been the scene of torture, massacres, infamy. One cannot enter there innocently by a kind of idealization, of this naive and idealistic indigenism that thinks that everything is fine provided it is ancestral. The human being throughout his life has had contact with forces of evil, so we must take care of ourselves. On the other hand, even with positive forces, one has to be prepared because they can be very strong energies and if one is not prepared or does not have the due respect or knowledge, they can affect them. The spiritual world is dual, white or black, unlike our human world where things are mixed. Spirits are either good or bad, angels or demons. On which side are you? The human being is neither white nor black, tends more to one side or the other, makes mistakes, learns and corrects himself. Unawareness sometimes lead us to make mistakes, because those negative entities are evil and they will try to deceive you, bother you, confuse you. There you have to be careful, be

protected, have respect, be authorized. For example, it happens with the tomb raiders. I don't know what their life will be like, but I imagine that there must be a lot of complication with them because of their desecration of sacred places. Once, when I was in the North Coast of Peru, I visited a *huaca* (funerary place) where there were tomb robbers who lived in poor barracks. I talked to one of them and asked him, since when are you here? And he told me that for a lot of years. Have you lived here so many years? - Yes, because I know there is a treasure and I am looking for it. It was really impressive for me because he had been tied to that for years, he had left his life, his family, his things, and he was there, a slave of this place, tied up as a prisoner, hoping to find something, while his life went by, health and everything, in that state of unconsciousness.



*"Bridges exist, the human being is one, the truth is one
and there are doors behind the material world"*

- **Speaking of all this, I was thinking about the Andean world where the mountains, lagoons, rivers and different elements of the landscape have a living link with the surrounding communities. Many times, before starting archaeological work in these places the community makes ritual offerings in which we participate and, in some occasions, we perceive these places in another way. It seems that in these events we can perceive these sites in the way it should be or as they are described by their own *comuneros*, that is, as living beings, no longer as nature/object. Do you think that it is possible to approach the understanding of the diverse Andean-Amazonian worldviews through these rituals and maybe to understand better the knowledge of our ancient peoples?**

I believe that it is a fundamental need. The world is completely under the Western ideological hegemony that is called globalization and not only economically, but also on a level of mind, thought, movies, food. There is a terrible destruction of the social fabric and discarding of spirituality is encouraged. It's a haunted, disoriented, desacralized world. The human being has an absolute need for sacredness, his being is a religious one by essence, an embodied spirit. If this soul of the human family is lost, if it devitalizes or dies, the despair and that lack leads to drugs and other harmful substitutes. From my point of view there is a need to learn about ancient traditions, sacred places, indigenous wisdom to revitalize our soul. It is also a mutual need. One cannot just think caricaturally that the Western world is bad and that the indigenous world is good, nor the other way around, as one usually does when something is idealized or demonized. One cannot, for the future, expect everything

from technological and scientific progress, nor return to primitive forms of life. It is about getting out of that dualism that distorts our perspectives. If the indigenous peoples do not train or prepare themselves, if they do not incorporate the positive elements of the Western world, they will not be able to defend themselves and survive. The indigenous societies are groups whose space of reference is their community, ethnic group, family, their tribe, their clan, and what is outside of it, is a potential enemy or adversary. For that reason there is chronic conflict between ethnic groups. Tribal thinking is based on a concept of life built on the founding myth of justice or reciprocity, in the sense that if you give to me, I give back to you and if you do not give to me, I will not give to you. It is the "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" of Jewish tribes where a righteous God predominates as seen in the Old Testament. It is the collective cultural psychic horizon of the tribal structure. The myth of reciprocity is very strong in the Andean and Amazonian world as dynamics of equilibrium. An indigenous Amazonian who goes hunting animals, has to make a payment to the spirit of the animals to ask permission and hunt only to feed and not to destroy. Thus, something is taken and in return something is given, that can be an offering, a retribution. In this reference universe reduced to my clan, while I protect my group, I am doing good. But to be protected from the enemy and eventually from the envy and wishes of the other group, which wants to take away the territory, the animals, it supposes eventually in this context having to attack the other tribe to respond to their aggressions. The violence towards the other group is justified. If they take away my women, I take theirs; If they take my animals, I will take away their animals, and I will constantly restore the balance. There must always be balance that equals to harmony, that is why in the Andean-Amazonian world envy is almost structural and is considered the greatest sin. In an ethnic group of tribal structure, no one can be placed on top of the other. When something is individualized it unbalances the group and endangers the integrity of the community. This gives rise to the practices of magic or sorcery within shamanism aimed at restoring order. In the same way, if you are going to visit an *apu* or a leader or a chief, you must consider the value of the offering or gift that you make him. If you give him something with such a value that he is not able to return it, you humiliate him by manifesting your superiority. You have indirectly said "I have more than you, I am more than you, I am more powerful, you owe me submission". You are insulting him and he will have to restore balance through an act of revenge. You have assaulted him unconsciously, the harmony is broken and to cancel this imbalance in the relationship, he feels obligated to an act of revenge or reciprocal aggression. Reciprocity applies to what we call good as well as bad, according to our universalist concepts.

- **What do you mean when you talk about the necessary incorporation of elements of the western world in the indigenous communities?**

Not only human society but the whole world is ordered according to this concept of the myth of justice or reciprocity. Thus, one must also be in a situation of balance with the gods, with the *apus*, with the spirits of the forest. This complex worldview is maintained to this day and has spread partly in the mestizo world. These are very deep structural elements of cultures. But humanity evolves in cycles and in each cycle a new cultural horizon appears with a new founding myth. It corresponds to access to a more evolved level of consciousness, in the same way that the human being grows and matures and his vision of the world is perfected. Those cycles that are described in several books of mythology, last about 2000 years, with a birth, a development and an ending linked to the appearance of the following myth. The western Christian world is based on another myth that is the myth of love. This myth means that there is no external enemy. Human beings belong to the same community, we are all theoretically brothers. Of course, the theory (myth) is ideal, but the practice can be another. However, the impregnation of the myth is very deep and

today, for example, if you reject the blacks you will be labeled a racist and no one will formally defend you. Everyone agrees in some way that it is something reprehensible. The family is no longer tribal but encompasses all of humanity. So where are you going to project your aggression now? To assault the other used to be justified within the tribal world, because you would always find a history of aggression against you. As with the children "he started first". What will you do with your shadow? With your violence? If it is not external, you have only to find it inside, inside yourself. That is why every Western considers in some way that his worst enemy is himself. Although they know nothing consciously about these mythological cultural structures, they assume that their greatest difficulty comes from themselves, from their shadow, their anger, their defects, from their unconscious, their internal "devils". They have to work on themselves, to know themselves. This myth of love, therefore, broadens the dimension of consciousness, allowing the emergence of an individual conscience, of an I differentiated from the community, of a subject with a greater degree of freedom and autonomy. Rather, in the traditional community, the important thing is first of all the group, and not the individual. If it is necessary to sacrifice a member to protect the community, it is done without hesitation. While in the constitutions of Western countries, the individual is considered the supreme goal of society.

There is a transition period from one cycle to another and in our time we live the end of the cycle of love started 2000 years ago. The Old Testament was not annulled but surpassed by the New Testament. A myth integrates the previous one transcending it, although at the beginning it seems to contradict it. The cycle of Christianity-love is ended as we have known it, and the new founding myth of freedom is emerging. In our days, everyone wants to be free, there are movements for sexual, political, expression, gender freedom etc. The desire for freedom seems to us an evidence, but it was not always like that. We are discovering the new myth of freedom that nobody understands in its fullness. In full transition from the myth of justice in the Old Testament, to the myth of Christian love in the New Testament, there was strong resistance because love was seen as an injustice. Is it fair that if they hit me on the right cheek I do not react and offer the left cheek? Is it fair that Jesus was sacrificed while being innocent? But in the long run, it is shown that Love surpasses Justice and goes further, reestablishing it at the end but at a higher level as Solomon intuited in his famous judgment. Thus, today, freedom seems to contradict love, since love binds us to the other. Therefore, we try to invent free love, where you can sleep with all the women you like, without establishing links that seem to oppose freedom. But then it is no longer love, nor it is freedom but libertinism where one is bound to his passions. Nobody knows what freedom is and we are going to discover it gradually. What can be anticipated is that freedom is only at a spiritual level. It's a sign of air, the Aquarius in the symbolic classification of the zodiac, in the same way that love was linked to the heart, to affection, to a water sign, Pisces, in the zodiac. In the collective consciousness of humanity, we are losing the previous myth of love, and the search is growing, although still erratic, for what Freedom is. This was announced even in the Andean traditions, which consider the arrival of a time of the spirit where, at the beginning, the *chakaruna* - bridge men - will play a fundamental role during this transition phase.

- **How to face this freedom myth era that you mention?**

This new myth of Freedom is emerging through trial and error. Freedom consists in surrendering totally to your personal vocation, to be in total harmony with what life gives us, with the place where we were born, the family to which we belong, with the inheritance of our ancestors. Because there is no other person like you, you are unique in space, in time, in history, in the cosmos. Nobody else occupies this place, neither occupied it before

or will occupy it afterwards. Therefore, you are the only person who can celebrate life where you are! You have to find your site! If you find it, you can totally surrender to it and be in harmony with everyone because you do not overflow on anyone's territory and nobody can overflow on yours. There I can express the fullness of my potential, realize myself fully and that is to be free. When you find what fills all your aspirations, the deepest or highest, you don't need anything more. It doesn't mean that other things are bad, they are just not necessary to me. So, I can easily give up what does not belong to me. To make a simple example, if you do not have the soul or genius of a musician, even if you want to, it's not your place. It doesn't mean that music is bad, it's just not for you, you have something else that is equally valuable, but different. There you will have to sacrifice everything that does not correspond to that, to see clearly what your full realization allows you. And in this place exclusively yours you can participate in a more complete way to the social dynamics responding to the needs of the community that only you can cover, and without bothering anyone. Freedom is surrendering, and being totally imprisoned of your vocation, and that is the paradox of the spiritual world. Freedom is not found in matter, in the sensitive or material level, or in sensuality as it is now believed, where it is confused with caprice, doing what you want when you want. Freedom is only spiritual, it is what calls me, what excites me, my highest destiny. If I seek freedom within matter, I am searching in the wrong place, and I lose myself by wanting a thousand things that can never satisfy my strongest thirst that is spiritual in nature. The encounter with the divine.

Then, it is necessary to consider the evolution cycles of humanity to understand in what era we live. Each one needs to evolve and purify oneself, keeping the essence, sacrificing everything that doesn't correspond to oneself. Stop wanting to be something different than what I am. Reconcile with myself, with my inheritances, with the world and with God. Accept who I am in all the dimensions of my existence.

Indigenous peoples are still associated with the dogmas of the myth of Justice and will have to move quickly from Justice to Love and then to Freedom. But they have the necessary tools within their own traditions if they let themselves be fertilized by the myth of love. This means that they see their own collective shadows, such as witchcraft, sorcery, magic, and renounce inter-tribal wars in order to stand in solidarity with each other and thus survive from mutual support. This is what inter-ethnic associations are now doing to defend themselves as a whole. Many no longer want to take ayahuasca with healers, they are afraid because they are warriors suspected of being sorcerers. In this confusion, numerous shamans are being killed in a permanent war. Without the myth of love, without forgiveness, they won't be able to survive.

On its side, the western world will not be able to move to freedom, if it forgets that we have our feet on the ground and is part of nature. The Amazonian peoples don't have to be taught that because they know it perfectly and have maintained respect to their source of revelation, nature in the broad sense of the word, the cosmos, source of wisdom and knowledge. The birth of the individual has degenerated into a ferocious and lethal individualism. It is necessary to leave the closed Western rationalist objectivity, to unite the left and right hemispheres of the brain, to unite traditional and Western peoples or their thoughts. Get reciprocally fertilized or both will die. It is a vital and reciprocal need. And who is going to do that? *Chakarunas*, people who can have a link with both hemispheres, who are symbolically people who have one foot in one world and one foot in the other. People that serve as interpreters, translators, link both worlds and protect them from possible abuse between them. They must know something of scientific rationality to alert the indigenous people so they will not be fooled and fascinated by the Western world and

its shadows. They should also alert Westerners to the dangers of the shadows of the indigenous world and the practices of witchcraft or subliminal manipulation that may give rise to spiritual contaminations. Both worlds have their shadows, there is no one that is better than the other, they have different and complementary functions. If you gather the best of each one and associate their values, their strength, their knowledge, life will rebound towards freedom. 500 years ago, there was an important failed meeting between the western and indigenous traditions, but the time has come for a possible real, authentic, fecundating, as well as vital encounter, and this will be a spiritual encounter, or it will not be at all.



“The Chakarunas link both worlds and protect them from possible abuses”