Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants

Author Note

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The book elaborates on how our social life, particularly language, is connected with our natural world. The writer exemplifies Potawatomi's ancestors to describe the cultural values of gratitude in which we should be living. The writer explains the cultural cycle of gifts, which follows reciprocity. It's a system in which everyone is assured that the gifts will return back to them following the circle of reciprocity. The grass is described as a ring that moves from the values of gratitude to the values of reciprocity (*Project MUSE -* Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants *by Robin Wall Kimmerer (Review)*). The writer maintains that natural world showers human beings with enormous gifts that are not meant to be kept by us; rather, we should move them on and let the cycle of reciprocity continue. The work we put in nature, along with our joy, moves on to the recipients of the natural gifts and will return back to us.

The writer attempts to build a synthesis between the western and indigenous comprehension of ecology and social life. Kimmerer points out the relationship, and the responsibilities of indigenous population have maintained with the natural world. She presents thirty two narrations of encounter, among sciences, leaning and language.

The book is an addition to the discussion of relationship between the traditional ecological knowledge systems and western scientific practices. She develops an approach of environmentalist approach toward social sciences. The approach of environmental humanities maintains that the indigenous populations have succeeded in maintaining an informed and scientific relationship with the natural world around them. The work follows the philosophical approach based on the narration of indigenous ontological knowledge, by the process of introducing a holistic kind of reorientation of the environmental sciences. The writer adopts a narration style of storytelling, which enables the readers to value and acknowledge the potential of human relationships with a nonhuman world around us.

The writer maintains the notion that humans should interact with the earth in such a manner that it should be thankful for having humans on the planet. She maintains that the plants which are used and loved by human beings develop a reciprocal relationship as a result. She exemplifies the findings of one of her students, which shows that the sweetgrass which grew by harvesting was more healthy and shiny than the sweet grass, which grew without human interference.

The book claims that modern human cultures require a system of generative reciprocity. She advocates an economic system that is in alignment with the natural world and life. The writer also helps the reader to realize that the plants also contain some level of consciousness, senses and are able to communicate with humans as well. The colonial mindset cannot let us believe or even recognize the consciousness of the plants.

Kimmerer further explores in this book the different aspects of gift economy by the thorough examination of human relationships with plants. Although the different theorists of radical economics theorize the ways which can lead us to a gift economy, Kimmerer maintains that such an economy already exits. It does not need to be created. The economy of earth has existed for infinite times, and humans are an inherent part of this economy. We only need to recognize this economy, respect this system, and be thankful for its existence. The plants have been teaching humans for as long time as our ancestors taught us, with much generosity and wisdom than humans.

# Conclusion

The relationship between humans and nature is immortal. In present times, we need to recognize, appreciate, and strengthen this relationship in such a manner that benefits both humans and nature. The reciprocal relationship between humans and nature needs to be studied scientifically. The traditional indigenous knowledge systems are a fine example of the reciprocal relationship between humans and nature.

# References

*Project MUSE -* Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants *by Robin Wall Kimmerer (Review)*. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/738400. Accessed 11 Dec. 2019.