

Podcast: The Andean Cosmovision
Episode 5: Delving More Deeply into Intent, Ayni, and Salka
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Welcome to the audio presentation of The Andean Cosmovision

Hi, I am Oakley Gordon.

I introduced the concepts of *intent*, *ayni*, and *salka* in earlier episodes of the podcast. I would like to now go into them in more detail. I hope that this will be of service to you, both in doing the Andean meditations, and in integrating the Andean Cosmovision with our Western worldview. It is from my efforts, for many years, in those directions that the thoughts that I am about to share have emerged.

Intent

I will begin with a deeper look at "intent". Note that I am using the term here not as it is found in a dictionary, but as it used in describing the Andean Cosmovision. I have divided this topic into three sections: intent as the doorway into the sacred, intent as *controlled abandon*, and intent as the breath of the Cosmos.

Intent as the Doorway into the Sacred

The simplest way of thinking about intent, what I call the "training wheel" version, is to define intent simply as *sincere pretending*. That is all you need to get an effect from the meditations, just sincerely pretend to do the various steps, and that is enough. I would like to elaborate on that a bit.

It is my experience that the Andean meditations get me in touch with the sacred. When I speak of the sacred I am not speaking of religion. For me the two are far from being the same thing.



Joseph Campbell, the great comparative mythologist, wrote a book about the role of masks in ancient ceremonies (his book is titled *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*). He was interested in the experiences of people who participated in sacred rituals where a performer wore a mask that portrayed her or him as a deity. The people at the ceremony usually knew the identity of the person wearing the mask. It may have been, for example, their uncle Charlie, so what did they believe about the person when he was wearing the mask in the ceremony? Did they believe that in the ceremony the mask actually transformed him into the deity or did they see him as representing the deity in a metaphorical sort of way?

Campbell argues that the people at these ceremonies didn't take either perspective. Those who believe that the mask actually transforms the person into a deity, the *true believers*—and this would include anyone who believes that their religion is literally true—do not belong at the ceremony. On the other hand, the spoilsports, the *skeptics* for whom the mask has no power to transform its wearer into a deity, for whom the ritual must—at best—represent a metaphorical transformation, are also not invited. According to Campbell, the statues of guardians—warriors, dragons, demons—that flank the entranceways into the ancient ceremonial sites are there to keep out what today we might call the religious mind as well as the scientific mind. Campbell believed that the

people at these ancient ceremonies took a third option, experiencing the ritual as neither literally true nor essentially metaphorical, immersing themselves instead in the realm of what Campbell calls 'as if'. Experiencing the ritual as if the person had become a god. Campbell's realm of 'as if' sounds an awful lot to me like the realm of intent.

The anthropologist Gregory Bateson had something similar to say. In addition to being an anthropologist, Bateson was also one of the founders of modern systems theory, and one of the first, and most influential, theorists to apply systems theory to the behavioral and social sciences. "The sacred" is a topic whose importance most scientists discount, or they, at least, fear to tread into the topic of the sacred. Bateson strode right into it, in his books "Sacred Unity: Further Steps to an Ecology of Mind", and in the book he co-authored with his daughter: "Angels Fear: Towards an Epistemology of the Sacred." Here is one of the things Bateson had to say about the sacred:

“[In the 1500s] in Europe, many Catholics and Protestants were burning each other at the stake, or were willing to be burned, rather than compromise about the nature of the bread and wine used in the Mass. The Catholics said that the bread *is* the body of Christ and the wine *is* the blood, the Protestants said, on the other hand, that the bread *stands for* the body of Christ and the wine *stands for* the blood. The point is not to say that one side is better than the other, but that the argument is one of fundamental importance in understanding the nature of the sacred and human nature ... Now it is my suspicion that the richest use of the word 'sacred' is that use which will say that what matters is the combination of the two, getting the two together. And that any fracturing of the two is anti-sacred. The Catholics and the Protestants were equally anti-sacred. The bread both is and stands for the body.”

Bateson goes on to say that the path to the sacred involves leaving what he labels 'prose thinking' (and that I label as 'the intellect') and entering into 'dream thinking'. In dreams our experiences are not labelled as true or false, factual or metaphorical. They simply are. This takes us back to the story of "why a swan?" that I recounted in the first podcast episode. When we attend a ballet, or view in reverie a beautiful sunset, or look, in effable wonder, for the first time into the eyes of our newborn child, truth and falsity are irrelevant. This is the state of intent.

Intent--as sincere pretending--empowers the Andean meditations to serve as a path into the sacred. I'd like now to look at both pieces of sincere pretending.

Pretending moves us out of the realm of the intellect, out of the world of both the scientist and the true believer. When we are pretending we are being neither skeptical or gullible, we are just having an experience.

Sincerity, well, what does it mean to be sincere? I think it is telling that we may wonder whether or not a person is being sincere, while it doesn't make sense to wonder if a computer is being sincere. I believe this is because sincerity moves us out of the realm of the intellect, and into the realm of the heart.

There have been times, over the years, when the Andean meditations have stopped having an effect for me, when the path into the Andean Cosmovision has become lifeless, and I no longer feel that it is giving me that beautiful sense of living a meaningful existence. When this has happened, I have realized that I have stopped "sincerely pretending". I have either stopped being "sincere" when doing the meditations, and have started to just mechanically go through the steps. Or, I have lost the "pretending" part, and have started to take the whole path too seriously and have moved into the realm of the true believer, at which point the scientist part of me jumps in full of skepticism, demanding proof of the various concepts within the Andean Cosmovision, and not finding it.

When this happens, I go back to sincere pretending; sincerely doing the meditations, rather than doing them mechanically; and pretending. For there is one aspect of my being on this path that my intellect

does know is true, from repeated experience, that sincerely pretending to do the meditations evokes effects on my that are beautiful and that I value deeply.

Sincere pretending is the only grasp of intent that we need to wander down the path into the Andean Cosmovision, and so, practically speaking, it is the most important understanding of intent. But intent is so fascinating, and over the years I have come to some other understandings of it as well.

Intent as Controlled Abandon

One day an Andean woman takes her baby with her as she goes down to the river to wash her family's clothes. Reaching the river, she places the baby, swaddled in a cloth, on a rock, while she begins to wash the clothing. Suddenly, the baby rolls off the rock and into the river. Without pausing to think, the mother dives into the river and saves her baby. This is also "intent".

This brings us to the distinction between "intention" and "intent", not a dictionary distinction but a useful distinction to make to understand the role of intent in our travels down the path into the Andean Cosmovision. An *intention* to do something is a thought that we will likely do it, it is our plan to do it, but then, of course, while it is our intention to do it, something *might* arise that takes precedence. This is *not* intent.

In my sophomore year of college I went to a party with my friend. Now, my friend, it should be noted, could be *really* obnoxious at times. At the party, he was so rude to a woman that she threw a glass coke bottle at him. Without thinking, and in slow motion, I reached out and caught the bottle an inch from his face. *That* was intent.

As a young college professor, I attended a workshop by John Grinder, a professor of psycho-linguistics who was a colleague of--and influenced by--Gregory Bateson. This workshop, by the way, led, through a story with twists and turns, to my meeting don Americo Yabar, my mentor in my exploration of the Andean Cosmovision. But that is a story to be told at another time. Back to the workshop, at the end of each day Grinder had us all come together in a meeting with a drummer from the Congo, who taught us African dancing.

On the last day of the workshop we all stood in a circle while he and his friends played the drums. One by one we stepped into the center of the circle to dance to the African music. When it was my turn, my mind turned off, my ego disappeared, I had no self-evaluation going on, no internal dialog about what others might be thinking of my dancing. Occasionally my mind would flash back on and notice how amazingly I was dancing, and then go away again. I realized afterwards that I had been dancing with intent, in the form of *controlled abandon*. This, by the way, was the reason Grinder had this be part of the workshop, for the workshop was about the quality of the relationship between our conscious and unconscious minds.

Intent, then, can be thought of as "controlled abandon". And that gets us to the very interesting, at least to me, question of, in controlled abandon, what is "abandoned" and where does the "control" come from?

What is abandoned, in intent, in controlled abandon, is having our intellect control our behavior. I define our intellect as the part of our mind that thinks with words and symbols. Our ego, the set of all concepts and beliefs we have about ourselves, is part of the intellect. When we act with intent we step out of that world of thoughts. Our behavior at that point, however, is not random. Something else, other than our intellect, is controlling our behavior. But who? Or what?

If we abandon having the ego-centered, self-reflecting, intellect control our behavior, then what is left? Our behavior is still controlled, it is not random, the mother goes after her child, I reach out and grab

the coke bottle, I do dance. But who is controlling us at that moment?

The psychological view is that it is our unconscious. Our unconscious mind does indeed exist and drives much of our experience, but with a little bit of examination it is clear that it is not the case in this context. The mother is conscious of what is going on while she dives into the river, it was just a consciousness without thoughts. I was conscious of the coke bottle moving towards my friend's face but I did not contemplate what should be done about it. I was conscious of dancing to the African music but without self reflection and evaluation of how I was doing. In the Western worldview we tend to equate consciousness with our intellect, perhaps because we spend so much of our conscious time engaged in internal dialog, which is an intellectual pursuit. It makes more sense to say that with intent, with controlled abandon, we move into an alternate state of consciousness. We are still conscious, but without thinking.

We can go even deeper with this idea.

Intent as the Breath of the Cosmos

The predominant view in the Western worldview concerning our existence as human beings is that we are separate, independent, objects, existing for a short time in a universe of objects. It is assumed that our existence stops at our skin, and that all aspects of our mind, including our conscious and unconscious minds, reside purely within us. In this view we are like billiard balls on a Cosmic pool table, completely separate from the other billiard balls, and everything about us is that is us is contained within the limits of our sphere.

If we harken back, however, to Episode One of this podcast, to what I referred to as "the scaffolding concepts" of the Andean Cosmovision, we find a very different view of both our existence and of the Cosmos. There the Cosmos was viewed as consisting of a vast network of energetic filaments, and where the filaments come together to form a bundle, or a node, is what we experience as an object. In this view, everything is connected, there are no "separate" objects. Again, in this view, you and I are nodes in the network of filaments, while we are *distinct* nodes we are also an inseparable part of the larger Cosmos. If we could somehow take a knife and cut all of the filaments that lead into our existence then we would be the *us* that we find in the Western worldview. As far as I know, that would be impossible, but it certainly can be done psychologically, through our beliefs and concepts of reality, and particularly through our ego, the set of beliefs and concepts we have about ourselves. Our belief system can inform our experience of our existence in such a way that our experience is that we are completely independent and separate objects, through the worldview given to us by our society.

I offer the filamental description as an alternative way of considering our existence, and I offer it not as a fact, but as an alternative metaphor. With metaphors we understand one thing, in this case our existence--which I propose is ultimately incomprehensible--by thinking about it in terms of something that we can understand; that we are billiard balls, or that we are nodes in a Cosmic network of filaments.

There are other metaphors I like that express our inherent and continual connection to the larger Cosmos. My favorite is that when we become Beings, we *emerge* from the Cosmos, and that this is not just a one-time-at-birth sort of thing--where we emerge and break off like a bubble to float away in an independent existence--but instead, that we emerge in such a way that we stay connected to the Cosmos. It is as if there is a well spring in the center of our Being, that the flow of this wellspring into our Being is our existence, and if we were to dive down into the spring we would arrive at its source...the Cosmos.

A similar metaphor, that I value, is that we are like whirlpools in the Cosmic Consciousness.

It is my experience when meditating, that the more I connect with Nature and the Cosmos, the deeper within myself I go. And the more I go inside myself, the more expansive I seem to be. This, I believe, is what Joseph Campbell was getting at when he wrote the book "The Inner Reaches of Outerspace". It also reminds me of the book "Little, Big" by John Crowley, where they further in the characters go the bigger reality becomes.

I have this sense, that as I go deeper and deeper within myself, I approach the Cosmos.

Don Americo has described moments when it seems to him that he is the flute and the Cosmos is the breath. I suspect that at times, when we let our ego dissolve, and have opened our consciousness to the Cosmos, that our actions flow out through us from the Cosmos, and that this is the deepest understanding of intent.

Now I would like to turn to the topic of Ayni.

Ayni

Ayni, spelled a-y-n-i, is such a fundamental aspect of the Andean Cosmovision. The essence of ayni is reciprocity, that is, when you receive something you give something in return, and when you give something you receive something in return. This keeps balance in the relationship, but it also does more than that. It nourishes the relationship as well. It is not a matter of breaking even in an exchange. It is, instead, like a spiral where the cycle of giving and receiving elevates both parties and continues to elevate as the cycle is repeated.

Let us begin by looking at ayni in the context of the Andean people and their relationships with each other. Ayni shows up clearly in the work that the people in a community perform together. When it is time to work a family's field the men and women in the community unite to work it as a community. The sowing of a field, for example, involves a line of men working foot plows to overturn the soil, followed by a line of women who plant the seeds (these relative roles of the sexes reflect important aspects of the Cosmovision). When such communal work is completed, the recipients rarely express thanks, for it is just part of life that they will then establish balance by working their neighbors' fields in turn. When you give you receive, and when you receive you give. Balance is maintained, both sides are nourished, and the community is healthy.

Ayni is like a pump at the heart of Andean life, it maintains a flow of energy throughout community.

I would like to share some of my own experiences with ayni from the perspective of a Westerner entering into a relationship with the Andean people. My trips to Peru involve working with various paqos (Andean mystics) and healers, and this "working with" often involves my participation in the ceremonies and healing rituals that they provide. What I can give them in return to balance our relationship, what they really need that I have, is money.

At the beginning of my exploration of the Andean Cosmovision I felt uncomfortable giving money in reciprocity. From my Western perspective it just didn't seem right to give money in exchange for a sacred experience. For one thing, giving money as a present in our society is often seen as involving less heart than a "real present". For another thing, our culture has some strong views about the relationship between the sacred and the secular, and how when the two are mixed in the wrong way then what should be sacred becomes profane instead. What comes to my mind as examples are the practice of religions selling forgiveness and millionaire televangelists asking people to show their humbleness and love for God by sending them money.

While ayni can take the form of money, however, ayni is not the same thing as payment. Ayni brings people closer together. The goal is balance rather than gain, mutual support rather than advantage. When I was able to shift from my culture's worldview to the Andean Cosmivision, I was able to enter into the true ayni of the relationship I was nourishing with the Andean paqos and healers. On their side they were willing to do the same, to interact with me in ayni within the context of the ceremony, rather than slipping into the Western, capitalistic, relationship with money that is encroaching into their culture. When, as part of the ceremony, I give them money as ayni, it still feels beautiful, touching, and sacred. Once the ceremony is over, however, then the context does shift. The sense of the sacred evaporates as they pull out their goods for sale, and haggling begins. The two ways of being in relationship, one of ayni within the context of the sacred, and one of sales within the context of commerce, could not be more different.

I would like to share another example of how ayni works in Peru. This specific instance occurred in one of my earlier trips. I had brought along some extra money to give to the people of Peru, not a lot, but it doesn't take much to help someone who lives in the high Andes. The challenge was to find a context in which I could give the money as ayni, rather than as charity from a (comparatively) rich Westerner to needy indigenous people (which is a much different relationship and not ayni at all).

Don Américo helped me with this. He is a maestro at shaping my well-intentioned efforts into something more beautiful than I anticipated. In this case we were in a very small village high in the Andes, this location was probably important to our success, as there the people still lived a life governed by ayni.

I was introduced, one at a time, to several people whom Américo knew could use some help. First, I was introduced to a middle-aged man who was suffering from severe diarrhea. He asked if I had anything to help. Being the well-prepared Westerner that I am, of *course* I had medication for diarrhea. I gave him some with instructions on how to take it. He thanked me most sincerely. A few minutes later he returned and gave me three eggs from his hens. I had completely forgotten about the ayni part of this! I was touched, and we both were pretty happy with our interaction.

Then I was introduced to two young girls who were orphans. Most of the people's needs are met by their family, and those who don't have a family, such as orphans and some elderly people, have a hard time getting by. The girls were friendly, and shy. They needed some money for school supplies, which I was happy to provide. With big smiles they each gave me a hug. Then one ran out and returned with a belt she had made and gave it to me as a present.

The next in line was a representative from the village Club of Mothers. The Club of Mothers meet once a week to pursue activities for the benefit of the children in the village. They work a plot of land that Américo donated to them, and they give the food they raise on it to the children, and they also work on weavings they sell at the market to buy things the children need. I gave her most of what money I had left, and after thanking me she returned and presented me with a live chicken. I thought about writing my sons to let them know that I was bringing home a sister, but we ended up eating the chicken that night instead.

At the end of the day I was introduced to a *very* old woman (don Américo thought she was more than 100 years old) whose family were all gone. I gave her the rest of the money I had. When I did, she grasped both of my hands with her aged hands, and looked into my eyes with a gentle smile, and said something to me in Quechua, which Américo then translated for me. She had said that she had nothing she could give me, so she would pray for me that night in her dreams. I couldn't imagine getting anything nicer than that.

That is what ayni is like.

Ayni informs the Andean people's relationships with each other, and in that context it can be easily understood. It is when the Andean people apply ayni to their relationship with Nature and the Cosmos that we move into mysterious territory and begin to glimpse the profound beauty of their Cosmovision. To understand how ayni works in this context we first need to understand their very different view of Nature and the Cosmos. It is not possible to have a true relationship with inert, mindless, matter. In the Western view of reality that is how rivers and stones and trees and the Cosmos itself are basically seen. Within our Western worldview we can love a forest or the Earth, but it is hard to conceive of them loving us back. As I described in episode one of this podcast, the Andean people have a very different experience of reality, where everything in the Cosmos is interconnected and everything is conscious. This way of experiencing reality allows a true, not just a metaphorical, relationship between humans and Nature and the Cosmos.

And ayni is fundamentally about relationships. In the Andean Cosmovision, we can have a beautiful relationship with Pachamama, the great being who is our mother the planet earth; with the Apus, the great beings who are the majestic mountain peaks; with the rivers, and the trees, and the stars, and with Mama Tuta, the void, mother night who holds the stars in her embrace, and with other Beings as well.

In the Andean Cosmovision humans are not distinct from Nature nor is Nature distinct from the Cosmos. The role of humans is not to use Nature for our own good, nor to serve as stewards *over* Nature, but, instead, to interact with Nature and the Cosmos in an interplay of respect and mutual support, recognizing that we humans are but part of the fabric of life, not its apex; we are children of Pachamama, but not her special children.

The Andean meditations can have very nice effects on our energy. I have found, however, that the deepest effects of the meditations come not from the meditations themselves but from the *relationships* they help us to form with Nature and the Cosmos.

The organizing aspect of that relationship is ayni. We can receive so much from Nature and from the Cosmos through the meditations. To complete the circle of ayni we can give simple offerings of gratitude to Nature and the Cosmos. Simple offerings have become an ever-present part of my Andean meditative practice. At first I offered them mainly because I had an intellectual understanding that ayni is a fundamental principle of the Andean Cosmovision. As I entered more fully into the Andean Cosmovision, however, I began to have moments of being overcome with appreciation of living in a conscious Cosmos, a Cosmos where the Pachamama accepts our hucha from us, where the Cosmos gives us refined energy to replace the hucha, and where all the facets of Nature and the Cosmos are available to help support our personal and interpersonal transformations. My offerings eventually became a matter of delight.

I always bring a little alcohol with me when I go into the canyons to meditate. After clearing my hucha, I pour a few drops onto the Pachamama with the intent that it convey my gratitude to her. If I am sitting next to a creek, I give a little to the creek with the same intent, and I spew a little into the sky for the Apus. These acts are my heartfelt way of nourishing my relationship with Nature and the Cosmos.

It is important to me that you understand the underlying nature of such an offering. The offering is not the material component of a spell to control Nature, nor is it a bribe or payment to Nature for services rendered. Giving an offering is like giving flowers to a loved one; it is an act that celebrates and elevates a loving relationship. It is in essence an energetic act, giving energy in the form of love as part of the circle of ayni. The beauty of ayni is that, unlike giving a store money in exchange for a fishing rod, it leaves both parties feeling like they have more energy than when they started. This extra energy arises from the nature of the relationship; it is like a spiral where every completion of the circle of ayni lifts both parties a little higher.

Occasionally I like to offer a more elaborate offering, and this takes a little bit of preparation. I base

these offerings on a few of the elements I have seen go into the very elaborate and beautiful offerings, called *despachos*, made by the paqos in Peru. For an offering to the Pachamama, I bring three red flowers and three white flowers. Red and white flowers are an important part of almost all Andean despachos. Red flowers represent blood, the Pachamama, the feminine. White flowers represent masculine energy, the snow on the Apus, and the stars. I also add three sugar cubes or three pieces of candy for the Pachamama. Once when I was in Peru, a Q'ero woman was describing to me the significance of the various elements she was adding to her despacho. She placed some candy into the despacho and explained that the Pachamama has a sweet tooth. Américo, who was translating for us, grinned and added that this might be a projection. Still, candy or sweets are a nice touch for an offering to the Pachamama.

To complete the offering for the Pachamama I dig a small hole into the earth. In the Andes a despacho would be wrapped in a large sheet of paper and tied with a string before burying, but I usually skip the paper for Western reasons (so that there will be less to biodegrade). Before putting the flowers into the ground, I hold them up to my lips and gently blow on them three times with the intent of connecting my filaments to the flowers and imbuing them with the very finest of my energy. I then gently place the sugar cubes and the flowers into the hole and pour a little alcohol on them while holding the intent of expressing my gratitude to the Pachamama for all that she gives us. Finally, I fill in the dirt on top of the offering and gently press it down with my hands. With my intent, I send the energy of the offering to Pachamama in gratitude.

For the creek that flows past my meditation spot I bring three red and three white flowers, gently blow on them three times to imbue them with my filaments and the very finest of my energy, and then I cast the flowers into the flowing water. I follow this with a little alcohol, again with the intent of expressing my gratitude to my brother the creek, for the beauty that he brings to my life, and for what he gives me when I meditate with him.

For the Apus, I use the same elements as I do for an offering for the Pachamama but I bury the offering in the slopes of the Apu. If I'm not actually at the Apu, I put the elements in a piece of paper, tied with a string, which I then place in a fire. As it burns I use my intent to send the energy of the offering to the Apu.

Sometimes I want to do something really special. The last time I made an offering for an Apu, for example, I added cotton fluff to represent the clouds, a small hummingbird figurine (hummingbirds are the messengers of the Apus), a small piece of silver accompanied by my apology for the silver mining that had occurred in the past in the Apu, a small rainbow bead to represent the rainbow that connects the Apu to Pachamama, a yellow flower to represent Tai Tai Inti (the sun), and so on.

The despachos made in the Andes are quite elaborate and are built around a specific intent that may go beyond expressing gratitude. Simple offerings of gratitude, such as the ones I have described, have no set formula, and are called haywariskas. Well, perhaps they do have a formula, which is simply to follow your heart in the creation of the haywariska and to be sure to include the intent of expressing your gratitude. The most beautiful haywariska I have been a part of occurred during a don Americo workshop held in Hawaii. He asked us to all gather three red flowers and three white flowers. We then drove part way up the slope of a volcano. There, on the breast of Pachamama, we laid down our flowers, and with our intent expressed our gratitude. It had been cloudy all day, but when we were finished with the haywariska, a single shaft of sunlight pierced through the clouds and illuminated our offering, in great beauty. It doesn't get much better than that.

Ayni is about relationship. You may know that true magic can arise in our relationships with others. This is basic systems theory stuff, where emergent properties arise within a system, such as a relationship, and the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts. In a relationship, phenomena

arise that are not found in those who are in the relationship, but instead emerge from the relationship itself.

The meditations can be of great benefit to us, but when they are part of our relationship with Nature, with the Cosmos, a relationship informed by ayni, then something special and beautiful emerges, from our relationship with Nature and the Cosmos, and we begin to blossom into the essence of who we each uniquely are.

Perhaps I can give you an example. This is ineffable, but I will try to convey to you a *sense* of what I want to communicate. One morning I had gone to a canyon stream with some friends to engage in Andean meditations. When the meditations were over, and we had completed the circle of ayni with Pachamama and the river, we sat and chatted for a while, about our lives, the universe, and everything. But I found myself drifting away from the conversation. My consciousness began to expand beyond the confines of myself, I felt as if, I, was growing to include the stream and trees around me, and the birds that were flitting from tree to tree. I then became aware of myself, sitting on the banks of the stream, and I was aware of much more expansive experience of me, and the thought arose in my mind "Oh...THERE I am!" As if I had been looking for myself for so long.

Your experiences, actually my experiences too, my differ. But my point is that what happened was not an effect of the meditations we had engaged in that morning. It felt like it arose from the relationship between me and Nature and the Cosmos, emerging at that moment.

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Before closing the topic of ayni, I would like to step briefly into the topic of the ayni between you and me. I would also like to talk about the ayni and between us and the people of the Andes, for this path is not about "us", you and me, it is about the big "US", you and me and the Andean people and the Apus and Pachamama and Mama Cocha and Mama Tuta and others.

First, the ayni between you and me. This is a challenge for me to talk about, for whatever I say may come across as self-serving, but I would like to talk about it anyway. If you would like to give me something back for sharing the Andean Cosmovision with you, you can buy my book (details to follow) or make a donation on my website or blog (details to follow). When I give workshops I suggest that the participants give me a small donation as well. I would like to share a little about my experience with this ayni, as it sheds light on how ayni can work.

I started on this path into the Andean Cosmovision for selfish, or at least self-centered, reasons. I was very depressed about having a life that seemed to have so little meaning, and with not enough beauty, in it. As I experienced this path my heart made it clear to me that this path was going to be good for me. And it was, and after a while, it stopped being about my needs and started to be about others, and the Cosmos, which is what you would expect from a path of heart. When I share with others in my culture how to explore this path, I don't do it for the money, I do it out of love and because it gives me a sense that in doing so I am living a meaningful life. And what I find is that if I continually give to others without receiving sufficient ayni back, if there is a lack of balance in that way, then I eventually burnout, and have to take a break, sometimes for a long while, turning my attention to other things, until I have regained the desire to move on with this endeavor. When I receive ayni back, however, and the give and take is balanced, I find myself energized by this work, rather than eventually feeling depleted. That is how ayni works.

Now I would like to move on to the ayni between our culture and the people of the Andes. I give half of the ayni I receive--book royalties, workshops fees, and donations--to the people of the Andes who have so open-heartedly shared their cosmovision with the West. This creates a huge, globe-spanning, circle of ayni between our two cultures. I think this is a beautiful thing. I feel that I ought to mention

that I don't ask the people for receipts, so you just have to take my word for it that this is what I do.

If you would like to donate to nonprofit organizations whose mission is to help the indigenous people of the high Andes, then I recommend Kenosis Spirit Keepers and The Heart Walk foundation.

The mission of Kenosis Spirit Keepers is to honor and preserve the integrity of indigenous wisdom and sacred cultural practices by providing cross-cultural exchanges, education, and community-building opportunities. I am the vice president of Kenosis Spirit Keepers.

The Heart Walk Foundation partners with indigenous communities in Peru on projects that strengthen food security, education, health, and respect for traditional cultural practices.

Links to both organizations can be found on the blog page that hosts this episode of the podcast.

Salka

So, on this episode I have covered "intent" and "ayni". The third, and final, topic that I would like to delve more deeply into is "salka" (s a l k a).

Salka is a challenge for me to talk about on this podcast, for two reasons. The first one is that whenever my friends or I say the word "salka", everyone else echoes back "SALKA!" And it is hard for me to speak the term without that particular enthusiasm.

The second challenge is that salka is the deepest term of them all, and the deeper they are the more ineffable they are. Indeed, I have come to realize that salka is deeper than the Andean Cosmovision, and that the Cosmovision is but one way to get in touch with our salka. For several years don Americo had encouraged me to write a book about the Andean Cosmovision before I actually did so, but I had to wait until I was ready. It took me about 16 years of experientially exploring the Cosmovision before I felt able to write about, as I wanted to make sure that what I shared came from my experiences, rather than from parroting don Americo or the paqos. That is part of the beauty of this path, to me, that when we explore the Andean Cosmovision it is through our own connection with the Cosmos, and rather than ending up as clones of don Americo we end up being more the essence of who we each are. For the past few years Americo has been asking when I will stop writing about the Andean Cosmovision and turn to writing about salka. I am still not there, so I will just do the best I can for now.

I would like to begin by repeating the basics of salka, as I explained the term in Episode One. *Salka* is a quechua term. It can be translated as *undomesticated energy*. The dog has domesticated energy while the wolf has salka. The chicken has domesticated energy while the condor has salka. The sheep has domesticated energy while the deer has salka. Actually, all beings have salka, it is just that in domesticated beings, the domestication is like a veneer through which the light of salka has to shine.

The biggest picture of what the Andean meditations do for us, of what we find when we explore the Andean Cosmovision, is that we get in touch with our salka energy, the beautiful energy that exists outside of the "us" of our ego, outside of the "us" that our society has shaped.

There are people who live in the high Andes who are very salka. You can see its light in their eyes, you can see the serenity in their faces, you can feel it inside yourself when they interact with you. Imagine being a young child living at 15,000 feet in the Andes. You live in your family's small stone house built of the material of the Pachamama. Such a house is known as a *wasi-tira* (literally a 'house of the earth'). The heart of the house is the *quncha*, an oven made of earth that forms a hardened hollow dome of adobe with an opening on the side for feeding wood into the fire and a few openings on top that are just the right size to sit the pots. You awake in the morning to the warmth of the quncha and the aroma of the soup that your mother is cooking for the family. Climbing out from under the

llama skins you prepare to take your family's alpacas and llamas up the mountain to feed. You take along your *waraka*, a woven sling that you use to throw rocks to the side of the herd to direct them where you want them to go and to ward off the pumas and foxes of the high Andes.

As the first rays of the sun lick the frost from the mountain's side you slowly lead the herd up the mountain to 16,000 feet, where there is ichu grass upon which they can feed. You find a comfortable place to sit. A thousand feet below is your home, a little smoke coming out of the hole in the roof. Up here, however, all is salka. Despite your being at 16,000 feet the Andean peaks tower high above you. All you hear is the soft steps of the alpacas as they graze and the wind coming down from the mountains. The air is clear and the towering peaks, although they are miles away, seem almost close enough to touch. Below you a condor glides down the valley barely moving its wing tips to control its flight. You notice clouds gathering around the Apus, perhaps the Apus will send rain in your direction, or the deadly thunder and lightning. As you sit looking at the Apus you can feel that they are as aware of you as you are of them. This is salka, you are surrounded by salka, and you are salka, too.

In Peru I have gazed out over cultivated fields on the sides of mountains on slopes so steep that it is hard to stand. The fields have been cultivated for hundreds or even thousands of years. It is hard to put into words, but somehow the farmland feels as wild and natural as the national parks in the United States. The people who live there belong there, their presence is as natural as that of the condors and the pumas and the wind that blows through the trees.

We here in the modern, Western world, are heavily domesticated. That is not a bad thing, our domestication allows us to operate within our society, and to reap the benefits (as well as the deficits) of our technological advancements. Unless we want to live as hermits in a cave we need to be able to operate in our society, within our society's consensus view of reality. It is just that we are so out of balance, we are so domesticated, getting in touch with our salka gets us in touch so much more with ALL of who we are. The Andean meditations get us in touch with our salka. Then we can choose, to be domesticated when we go to the grocery store, and to be salka when we stand on the side of the mountain and open our arms to the stars in the dome of the night sky.

Salka is like a wind that blows through consensus reality from beyond, bringing us into contact with the great mystery and beauty of our existence. Our society knows this not, but my heart yearns for it, and when I encounter it--when I find it within myself--my heart starts to sing a beautiful melody.

Don Americo and his son Gayle have founded The Poetic Salka Movement on the Planet. It is not a political movement, or a social movement, or an economic movement, it is a poetic movement. There are no membership lists, no rules. Walk the path of heart into the Andean Cosmovision and you are a member.

This is the end of episode five of the podcast: The Andean Cosmovision. The podcast covers some of the material presented in my book: The Andean Cosmovision, available in both printed and electronic formats, and which can be ordered through your local bookstore, as well as through Amazon and Barnes & Noble. The podcast is being made available so that those of you who want to explore the meditations can listen to an auditory walk-through of the meditations while you are meditating. As I began to record the meditations I realized that I also wanted to add some of the conceptual, supporting, material. Many more meditations, and supportive conceptual information, may be found in my book (The Andean Cosmovision) as well as for free in my blog. For more information on the book, my blog, and other supportive material, please visit my web site at: www.SalkaWind.com. That is salka with a k, salkawind.com. In my blog and on my website you can also find a Donate button, in case you would like to create a circle of ayni with me and with the people of Peru. More information is available on the website. This is Oakley Gordon. Thank you.