

## **The fishing bird and the greedy snake: a story about humanity**

I am going to present you with a small fragment of the wisdom of my people

Pupykary (also better known in Brazil as Apurinã). The greatest of all our deities, Tsura (Apurina God), the creator of the universe was weaving a toy with the straws of the kÿnhary (Buriti palm tree), when suddenly he was swallowed by this toy, and turned into a voracious and large, venomous and greedy kotory (coral snake). At that time, his brothers gathered all the animals of the forest to try to pierce the snake's belly, and get Tsura out of its belly. The voracious and greedy snake grew fat and went on eating one by one of his brothers and the animals of the forest, swallowing everything. It was only when the unexpected and small bird we call Paratxary (Kingfisher) achieved the feat of freeing Tsura and the others, pulling them out of the belly of the greedy and selfish snake.

The kingfisher is a bird that measures 42 centimeters in length and weighs up to 340 grams. Its beak reaches 8 centimeters, and its smallness and fragility contrasts with the gigantic immensity of the forest, its huge trees, almost imperceptible in the cosmic infinity of the Amazon Forest. Its audacity was with his beak, to slowly manage to tear an opening through which Tsura and all the other prisoners to get out, when many doubted and laughed at the tiny bird in front of the huge greedy snake. With perseverance and persistence, he achieved the feat of freeing Tsura.

With this instigating and unusual scene transmitted by the wisdom of my people, Apurinã indigenous people who traditionally inhabit the lands and territories along the Purus River basin and its tributaries, in the Amazon region of our country, Brazil, I would like to offer you words with magic, that is, enchanted words (as we say in our tradition), to present to you a little of our ways of being and living in this cosmos, our civilizational values and thoughts, in these different times and diverse spaces swallowed by artifacts that have taken on a life of their own and become greedy, insatiable snakes.

The Apurinã people are part of the more than 305 indigenous peoples of Brazil. Yes! We Are indigenous peoples. Yes! we are Brazilians, but most of all we are multiple indigenous civilizations that speak more than 274 languages

languages, with plural histories and societies that make up an immense cultural, social, environmental and territorial diversity that was also blossomed with the Afro-Brazilian diaspora and its various ethnicities and cultures that came to constitute the current Brazil.

We are not savages! We are not the good savages, nor are we the bad savages of nature. We are human civilizations, and we are human like you. But, we are different and diverse.

The presence of indigenous civilizations crosses all the biomes of the country in a diversity of ecosystems: the Amazon rainforest, the Cerrado (savannas of central Brazil), the coastal Atlantic Forest, the Pantanal, the Caatinga of the interior Northeast Brazil, the Pampas, and the Campos. Brazil's indigenous population is present in urban areas and cities, as well as in rural areas.

The whole world is being swallowed by the greedy Big Snake of melancholic passive consumerism, individualism, self-abandonment, and selfishness. Managed and organized by the warlike march of active, devastating nihilism.

We, the Apurinã people, have learned to seek involvement within the lightness, the deep alterity, not only of the other, but of all living and enchanted beings. For us, thought is collective, not the property of someone, of an individual. We practice the exercise of caring among us (human and non-human). And everything is crossed by the currents of affections and the flowing waters of caring for oneself and for the other. Your western humanity has lost itself with time, forgetting its original shelters and channels of the Earth - valleys, woods, mountains, rivers, animals, and where you came from, and the awareness of the subtle links that connect you to the places of nature.

You need to reconnect with your noblest values and open yourselves up to connections with your origins and be receptive to differences, for diversity was, is, and will be the way of life among us on this planet.

Caring for this planet is caring for all of us, with our weaknesses and smallness. And to recognize this is to recognize oneself collectively. I come from the Purus River, a tributary of the Amazon River, in the Amazon region of Brazil. This river flows into a larger river and meets the seas further on, and these seas converse with the King Sun and the stars in the mornings and connect with other continents. I pray that all of this will continue to exist, so that others different from me can look and enjoy these beauties and know how we of the Apurinã people know that we are part of this place in the universe.

I am Kowawa, an Amazonian plant, and when I think of this plant, I think of the place of belonging and ancestry. One day my daughter said: - "mom, we are all plants, trees, animals". And I started to reflect about the human essence and the care for us, because when I love myself, I am capable of loving. In the cosmic interior of the Amazon Forest, the Atlantic Forest, the rivers of the savannas of central Brazil, no matter the ecosystem, when we search and look for food, we learn that these forest entities offer us food without asking anything in return.

We have to look at the places on the planet, not as "capital reserves", but as part of our own bodies, as part of our own lives. Cosmic gifts offered by tremendous, foreign divinities, tremendous, unknown, and that will never will never return to give us this free and generous gift.

Catastrophe is on the march, and this complex little blue dot of the solar system full of lives, beautiful landscapes and diverse cultures is in crisis, breathing so bitterly. It is not only a climate crisis, the destruction of forests and ecosystems, water pollution, massive waste disposal, all to feed the greedy and insatiable Big Snake that with its eager mouth swallows, swallows and swallows more and more people, subjectivities and cultures.

Greedy, selfish, solitary snake. It will destroy everything just to satisfy its insatiable hunger. It will destroy everyone! At first it was just a toy, now it is a monstrous, savage, blind snake that eats the entire globe of the earth....

Just one snake? No, but many greedy and blind Big Snakes all over the planet. What can you do against the Big Snake? You have to rip open its belly like the tiny, tiny, fragile Kingfisher bird did. Managing to open the snake's entrails and free Tsura (our God).

Our deity Tsura, our creator, taught us many things, how to make things, artifacts, and even forests. Yes, the Amazon Forest is standing only because Tsura taught us to take care of it, to scatter seeds in it, to plant seedlings, to take out only what is necessary, to ask permission to the spirits who inhabit it and who are its caretakers (and who knew those foreign deities who left the planet for Tsura to recreate in it our forest-land-house).

Today botanists, biologists and anthropologists have confirmed with their studies and research that the Amazon Forest is the result of manipulation and management through the traditional technological practices of the indigenous peoples who, with their traditional

technological artifacts have transformed and enriched the biodiversity and the Amazon Forest without destroying, deforesting the forest or polluting the rivers and watersheds.

They have proven that the indigenous civilizations of the Amazon over thousands of years have been accompanied by anthropogenic forests, that is, the expansions of the indigenous civilizations have not resulted in forest destruction but rather, on the contrary, in the increase of biodiversity. The forests of the Amazon are anthropogenic forests (cultivated and managed by human action).

Tsura, our demiurge, taught us artifacts to care for the forest and animals, and to increase and animals and to increase and diversify them. But as the wisdom of the Apurinã, there are artifacts that can become destructive and even take on a life of their own and become a voracious, great, greedy snake. And then it will take a lot of kingfisher birds to tear the belly of these selfish and blind, with their bellies full of emptiness and loneliness.

This gift of wisdom from the Apurinã people that I leave to you through these enchanted words, so that we can become an artisan, light as the wings of a hummingbird that holds itself against gravity. Let's use our thoughts like the beak of the Kingfisher bird, or like the songs that come out of the conversation of the trees with the sky, from one place to another. Walking from the forests to rain/fertilizing a desert, plantations, and/or river headwaters.

That from these waters that spread from the continents of the forests, and from my Purus River there in the Amazon, to one day arrive in so many places, carried by the winds of the dancing confluences, possibilities to become better beings. This watching for oneself is intrinsically linked to our human condition, regardless of origin, because the Big Snake that swallowed Tsura saw the kingfisher bird, and when its skin shredded, it transformed into a vapor and vanished into the blue sky.

Western humanity in crisis must let itself be enchanted not only by the diversity of indigenous civilizations in Brazil, but also in the Global South, and to building an enlightened ecumenism nourished by the wisdom of these civilizations, cultures to protect the Earth from the frivolity of the greedy and selfish Big Snake that swallows people, families, cultures, rivers, animals, mountains, forests, cities, spirits, and places.

The ongoing ecological catastrophe cannot victimize the little Kingfisher to save the Big Snake, but bring together all of the planet, the West and the global South (we are one), and

in the exercise of patience and perseverance to together and united, rip open the belly of the Big Snake!

In my people, words have spirit, that the good word of light, of the lightness of the breezes, the authority of the sun, illuminate us. And may our paths/crossroads be alternatives for you in the ways that we can step on the ground/land that welcomes us, to understand what they are doing to us.

We are an indigenous nation that suffered near extermination during the rubber cycles during the two world wars. We survived, we flourished in the midst of chaos, we (re)organized ourselves, we came out from inside the belly of the Big Snake, we strengthened our way of life through our shamans, witchdoctors and sorcerers, elders and elderly women. We learned Western languages, we brought writing, to write the good word, and we survive, and we are in our territories producing, reproducing, and reproducing and (re)meaning, in a silent confrontation like the jaguars, to continue our earthly journey, with dignity, wisdom, and love. We do actions, timid, precarious to western eyes (like the bird Kingfisher), important, to ensure the security of our territories, the tradition of our customs, the remedies of the forest, and the cures of illnesses. In the Covid 19 Pandemic, the use of these medicines, were significant. We use what we have been taught: our collective thinking.

I am Kowawa Kapukaja Apurinã, daughter of Sakema, granddaughter of Kasatô, sister of Kamara Kymio and Kamero. Friend of the Stars, lover of the deep waters. May the Gods of all territories and universes, who are of the Good Words teach us to walk on the only place we belong, which is our humanitarian cradle on Earth. My blood is Earth.

I give Gratitude!