

Module # 3 - Component # 1



Beliefs - African Folklore

Introduction

The content that follows is written from transcribed tapes recorded by **Credo Mutwa**. Credo Mutwa is one of Southern Africa's most celebrated **Sangomas** or **witchdoctors**. The content therefore is not scientific but rather represent the feelings , beliefs and experiences of this exceptional man.

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These stories are written in precisely the same way that Credo Mutwa tells them , with all their original colloquialisms and styles.

Smallpox Story of Ngoza

There are many stories told about the leopard and we cannot, at this moment, go into most of them. But I will tell you a story involving one of my ancestors - a mighty, but rather **crazy king**, whose name was **Ngoza**. Ngoza was a mighty king, a great warrior, but he was **rather eccentric**. He used to **leave his people alone and go and live in deep bush for many, many, many days** accompanied by his two dogs. And one day when Ngoza returned to his village, he found most of his people and all of his wives dead. **His family was wiped out by a terrible disease**, which had roared like a silent wildfire through the province of Natal one hundred years before white colonists invaded Natal. The disease had come up from the Cape and it had decimated people of many tribes. The disease was smallpox, a terrible disease that Africans had never seen before. It is said that smallpox wiped out all the Khoi-San people in the Ndedema gorge in the south of Natal, except a few pathetic survivors who ran for their lives as the epidemic tore in like a beast amongst them. And Ngoza saw the river near his village choked with the rotting corpses of his people. **People had been driven mad by this fever** of the smallpox and they had run into the river seeking relief from the cool waters of the river, and they had died there - men, women and children, young and old.

It is said that **Ngoza screamed aloud as he saw this terrible carnage**. He shouted at the gods. He **cursed the great gods in heaven**: “Why have you allowed an evil disease to destroy my people? You are not gods! I will no longer worship you! I will turn my back upon you!” And it is said that Ngoza **committed the worst sacrilege that a man of his time could commit** - he walked up to the **grave of his long-dead father** and he **urinated upon it**. And then he walked up to that of **his long-dead mother and defecated upon that grave**. And then, his heart bursting with sorrow, Ngoza turned and walked away back into the bush, because he knew that the spirit of the disease was still there waiting to devour him, and other people, should they dare to enter his village.

Ngoza walked away, we are told, and for some time he **lived in the bush**. For some time he was a lonely man, and then one day a **Khoi-San man suddenly appeared** out of the bush and smiled at Ngoza with broken teeth. Ngoza was glad to see a fellow human being. But Ngoza looked at the Khoi-San and he saw that the Khoi-San’s face was horrible. The Khoi-San had somehow survived the terrible disease, which had eaten nearly all of Ngoza’s people. **His face was pockmarked** and he looked weak, but there was courage burning in his slanted little eyes. And Ngoza and the Khoi-San became friends. They hunted together and they sometimes quarrelled and fought, but always they were reconciled.

And then one day people came upon **Ngoza**, his **own people**, people who had **survived** the horrible disease, and they asked him: “Ngoza, great warrior, we want you back as our king. We buried our dead relatives. We burnt your village to the ground and rebuilt it anew. We ask of you, **Ngoza, to come and rule over us again.**” And Ngoza returned to the village, a new village manned by new warriors and new women. And Ngoza was given wives and he started a new family. And **still his mind was obsessed** with the terrible disease that had swept his people away.

And then one day, Ngoza learned that **the disease was coming back again** and Ngoza said: “I deserted my people like a coward when this evil thing came. I will not run this time. **I will find a medicine against this disease** and I will know what it is.”

And then, it is said that one day the Khoi-San spoke to Ngoza and said: “Ngoza.” And Ngoza said: “What are you saying, you ugly little thing?” “I am your friend, Ngoza.”

“I know that, you little thief,” answered Ngoza. He loved this strange friend of his who was so full of wisdom.

And the **Khoi-san said** to Ngoza: “Ngoza, the disease is coming back again and it is going to eat you this time and all your people. And your children whom you have fathered are going to go away. But, Ngoza, **I can help you.**”

“What!” demanded Ngoza. “You say you can help me?”

“**Yes,**” said the Khoi-San. “And do you know, **in return** for your help, I want you to **give me the honour of wearing a leopard skin.** And I want you to **declare me one of your Indunas.**”

“A little thing like you becoming one of my Indunas! I agree, stupid. Now show me your medicine.”

The Khoi-San said: “No, Ngoza, no. You are not going to trick me that way. First of all I want another payment for helping you, Ngoza. And I will help you, I swear.”

“Oh,” said Ngoza. “And what do you want in return?” Well, Ngoza was bathing then, and the Khoi-San man looked between Ngoza’s legs and he said: “**I want your foreskin,** Ngoza.”

“You want my what?”

“Eh, I want your foreskin. You have got a lovely long one. Cut it off for me and I will save your people.”

“Aaay...” cried Ngoza. “You want to trick me.”

And then the Khoi-San said: “I am a man of honour and I don’t play tricks. Listen, let me tell you. **Let me show you.**” The Khoi-San took one of Ngoza’s warriors and made incisions upon him. And then he made incisions upon himself. And he smeared his own blood into the incisions made upon the Zulu warrior. And then the Zulu became very sick, we are told. And then, when the Zulu recovered, the Khoi-San told Ngoza to send the Zulu warrior into that part of the land where the new disease was eating people again. And the Zulu went and stayed for about two months in that terrible place and then came back alive.

“**What miracle is this?**” Ngoza asked the Khoi-San.

The Khoi-san said: “Listen, this disease is not as terrible as you think. If people are made strong with the blood of someone who has had this disease and survived, those people will not get the disease at all.

And thus it was, that the poor **Khoi-San had to lose a lot of his blood** in order to save Ngoza's people. And other people were found who had survived the terrible disease, and they were asked to use their blood to save other people. So King **Ngoza's people escaped the terrible epidemic**. Many of them survived, and thus the Zulus began to believe in what is called ***Ukuqinisa* - which means 'to strengthen.'** Even today Zulu people, and people of other tribes, have a ritual where incisions are made on a person's body and certain powders are rubbed into those incisions. This is done so that should the person be exposed to poison in which these powders are used as a poison, the poison would fail. Our kings in olden days used to have incisions made on their bodies, and certain poisonous plants (carefully powdered and diluted) were rubbed into these incisions - tiny quantities of them - and thus the king was strengthened against being poisoned, against witchcraft. But also there was a ritual where a person was incised and liquid from a person who had caught smallpox was heated and rubbed into his incisions. Let me tell you that **vaccination was not only developed by Dr Gena in England, vaccination was here in South Africa before the white man came** to this land. Our people knew about it and it was called *Ukuqinisa* – to 'make strong.'

Now, what about Ngoza? When Ngoza saw that his people had survived, that the disease had passed them by, Ngoza found himself honour-bound to fulfil his side of the bargain, by cutting off his foreskin and handing it to the Khoi-San to wear on a string around his neck. And we still say today: 'Oh Ngoza, if you wish to save your nation you must be prepared to part with your foreskin.' In other words: **if you want to do something great you must be willing to pay heavily for it**, because there was nothing more proud in a Zulu than his foreskin, and should he lose it, it was a great disaster. And thus my ancestor Ngoza lost his foreskin, but he had saved his people. He not only lost that lovely appendage, he also had to go into the bush after he had healed to hunt a leopard, so that he should give its skin to his little Khoi-San friend, who wore it proudly for many years, and when he felt himself dying, wrapped it around his wasted body, closed his eyes under a tree, and died. Both Ngoza and the Khoi-San are honoured as great ancestors by my people - the Mutwa, of the sons of Ngoza.

Ancestors

Now here is a strange thing. When I was at mission school and when you come to a new mission school the other children used to ill-treat you, to play tricks upon you, to terrorise you at night. And a group of young boys caught me and **put a crab in** my shorts, in **the pocket of my shorts**. They put one in here and one in there. There I was screaming and running fit to die. Then out in the bush I had to do something. **I took off my shorts and bashed them against a stone**. The two **crabs kicked the bucket** and my uncle was very, very sorrowful. He shook his head sadly. And shortly after that **I became very, very sick**. For two years I was so sick I could hardly walk. And they said it was because **I had killed my ancestors**.

Animals have feelings!

There is an extremely ugly superstition that one finds amongst all **western countries** throughout the world. This is the belief that we, **human beings, are the super race of this planet**, that **only we are capable of noble feelings**, are capable of **thinking** and of **loving**, that only we are capable of **feeling and feeling deeply**.

Anyone who has travelled by foot in his younger days through Africa will tell you that the belief that only human beings are capable of feeling deeply is a **rank and very dangerous philosophy**. If you **travel through the African bush**, preferably **alone**, you will feel feeling all around you, you will feel that all around you are living creatures who are watching you, thinking about you and feeling about you. If you walk into an area of Africa **where all wildlife has been decimated**, an area such as you find in parts of Mozambique nowadays where not even a bird is heard to sing. You feel an emptiness, a hollowness, a desolation. You feel that **something is missing here**. You feel that you are totally alone, that the universe has come to a standstill. But walk into a place, which is **teeming with wildlife**, the first thing that will happen is that hour after hour, by day or by night, you shall **smell the animals**. And if your nostrils are sharp enough you will be able to distinguish the **acid smell of a waterbuck**, the **horsy smell of a zebra** and the **heavy smell of a cape buffalo**, each smell apart from the others.

You will even be able to smell the ostrich, the vulture, the eagle. You will be able to smell the meerkat, the spotted wildcat, the caracal and even the crocodile. And believe me, **the smell of a crocodile is not a smell that one forgets likely**. It is a smell of death. It is the timeless smell of a huge reptile and also it is a smell of decay. If death has a smell, then that smell is like that of a crocodile. Not only will you smell the animals in the bush, but you will feel them. You will **feel the nervousness of the impala** long, long before it emerges from behind the bush to look at you. You will feel the kudu. And most of all you will feel the **leopard**, the **lion**, the **elephant** and in the waters of the muddied river, long before she emerges breaking the surface quietly you shall smell and feel the **hippopotamus**. All life is about feeling. All life is about thinking.

Whether you are in the **green chaos of the African bush** or deep under the waters of the ocean, you will know, oh traveller, that life is about feeling. That like you human being, **animals are gifted with curiosity, animals are gifted with thinking**. They want to know what is this strange creature, which has intruded into our environment. They want to know is this thing dangerous or friendly, is this thing death or life? Not only are animals capable of thinking, not only are animals capable of curiosity but they are **capable of remembering** as well and sometimes they remember far more deeply than we human beings do. If that were not so, then the incident that I am about to describe to you would not have happened.

If animals did not have deep memories, if animals did not have the ability to put two and two together and make four, then I would not have seen this incident I am about to tell you about and many others more. Animals have got far clearer memories than we, human beings have.

Elephant

One day, it was just after sunset, and I was sitting in a jeep together with a group of German tourists in the centre of an upmarket game reserve known as **Shamwari**, which is not far from the town of Grahamstown. We were **watching a group of elephants**, which had recently been brought to Shamwari from the **Kruger National Park**, were they had been saved from culling by the authorities there. These elephants were led by a female elephant, a **large matriarch** whom I named Delilah because there was a gleam in her eyes that was rather dangerous. Here was an elephant, who was a born schemer. Here was an elephant who would lead the others right into valleys of mischief and beyond. **I spoke my feelings to a fellow African who was sitting next to me.** I said that women elephant, she is very dangerous. Look at the way she walks, she doesn't feel at home in this place. Look how she swings her trunk this way and that. When an elephant does that it is because she is uneasy. And my friend, a young Xhosa, said, *hauw Mutwa*, you are an old man who talks too much. I said *yebo* don't you know that the oldest goat in the village is the one that bleats the most? And we were watching the elephants.

The elephants were over **two hundred meters away** and they were grazing, moving slowly through the stunted bushes. Then trouble started. There was an old windmill standing like an intruding skeleton above the greenery. And a rogue wind suddenly blew, starting up this windmill. The windmill was broken I had noticed. One of its blades was missing and another blade was twisted. And as the windmill started it gave out a particular, vaguely familiar and rather irritating sound. Ta-ta-ta-tat. All of a sudden a cloud of dust erupted where the elephants had been. **The elephants led by Delilah were fleeing from something.**

What are they running away from I asked stupidly? I don't know answered my friend. But there is no animal that I see near them, nothing that could have scared them this way. A few moments later the penny dropped in the dull corridors of Mutwa's tired old brain. **The elephants were fleeing from the sound of the old windmill.** Why? And the more the windmill whirled, the faster fled Delilah and her subjects until they were lost from sight, leaving only a cloud of dust to show us where they had gone. Then I suddenly realised why the sound of the spinning windmill had sounded so familiar to me. **It was like the sound of the rotors of a helicopter moving at slow speed.** Then the full enormity what I was hearing and seeing struck me. These animals had gone through the agonizing experience of being persuade driven to their doom by helicopters.

The people who used helicopters over countries game reserves do not realise that they are doing a terrible wrong; that these machines, useful as they are in war, **traumatise animals** especially animals such as elephants. An elephant is a huge creature but it has got a serious disadvantage, that when it is attacked from the air it is utterly helpless. **It cannot look up to see the source of evil that is pursuing them.** It has to flee with its eyes staring straight ahead of it, unable to see the thing that is roaring over them. We are cruel to animals and even those of us who claim to protect these animals, to ... and to shelter them are often unwittingly the cruellest people of all. I believe that helicopters should be banned from the game reserves and that rather **hot-air balloons**, whose sound can be lost in the wind, should be used when one is photographing animals such as elephants or driving them to a certain destination for a certain reason.

One thing do I know is that creatures, such as **elephants** and **rhinoceroses** and others, **know what the sound of a rifle means.** They know. And sometimes animals in areas where there is a lot of hunting **can distinguish between one firearm and another one.** I have seen giraffes continue grazing peacefully after someone had fired a shotgun in the vicinity. But I have seen these giraffes gallop for long moments after someone had fired the one particular kind of rifle that hunters use most in this place. There was no gun that filled elephants with fear more than the kind of gun known as the **banduki umkubwa** by Africans in Kenya. This is the special rifle known as a **nitro-express.** The sound of this rifle, the sound alone, was enough to freeze even the biggest elephant bull. They knew what it was, they knew what it did and they knew what it meant.

Let me go back to the story of Delilah, the elephant. When Delilah and her friends had vanished from sight, we turned our attention to other animals, **zebras, a few wildebeest and waterbuck.** And then we returned home. But a few days later there occurred an incident at Shamwari, which must have cost the owners of that game reserve a lot of money in compensation. Delilah and her friends decided to escape from the Shamwari game reserve. They burst **through the perimeter fence**, don't ask me how; they crossed a busy highway just outside the fence, almost giving a number of motorists heart attacks because it's not everyday that while you are speeding away in your modern Japanese car, you suddenly see a herd of elephants galloping across the road in front of you. You put on the brakes and your heart stops for a few seconds. The motorists saw the elephants crossing the road. Two cars smacked into each other, a second car smashing into the rear of another car. There was panic all around. **But Delilah was not concerned.** She led her friends out of the game reserve fence, across the busy highway leading to Port Elizabeth and through the fence of a large farm and across the landscape into the distance. We later learnt that Delilah had not only traversed that great farm, she had gone on to break through the border fence far to the south into another farm and into another one and then something happened.

There was a young elephant amongst Delilah's followers, a **young bull**. And this young bull somehow **got separated from the rest of the herd** and ended up in a stretch of veld, full of grazing cows. The elephant saw these strange animals to which he was not used at all and went on the warpath. It **speared one of the cows repeatedly with its tusks and killed it**. And it injured a second cow before it lost interest and went away. But you can't hurt a farmer's cows without paying dearly for what you have done and this elephant found out exactly that. The farmers came after it with their guns blazing and that was the end of that. Delilah fled down the map of the eastern Cape. She led her fellow elephants right down to the coast and there she stopped. And there like a fugitive convict, she was **cornered, drugged and brought back home**, as where the remainder of her herd. When people who knew things started looking into this whole thing, they found to their surprise that Delilah had not just travelled at random. She had **followed an ancient elephant migration** route, which was used in olden days by elephants migrating from deep inside South Africa right down to the Cape coast and then back again. In spite of manmade buildings, in spite of manmade super-highways, **in spite of the altered landscape, this elephant matriarch had managed to find the ancient route** that her ancestors had followed in days before the first Portuguese ship sailed around the Cape of Good Hope. How did she find this? How did she know? She was trying to lead her subjects to safety away from ugly memories, away from ugly sounds. Now, my friends, if animals do not feel, do not think and remember would this have been possible? The answer is no.

Feelings

Here is another thing. Next time you travel through the African bush slowly, respectfully and quietly, you must **observe how animals, which are gifted with horns and other defensive weapons, use those horns or those weapons.** A **gemsbok** defending itself against a **lion** will use its long straight horns in a certain way. It will use them to maximum. It will use them as if it knows what shape they are, how long they are and how sharp they are. Some animals do not use the points of their horns when they are fighting over females. They don't stab each other. They **use their horns as battering rams** to batter each other into submission. But should they be faced with a deadly predator such as a lion or a hyaena, they will use in sheer desperation the sharp points of those horns. So they are capable of thinking. They know that it is wrong to use the points of my horns upon a fellow gemsbok, or a fellow impala. But against a predator, which means to kill the horned antelope, the antelope will use every power of its sharp horns.

The Steenbok (Horns And Tusks)

There is in South Africa an animal, which our people **revere and fear** very, very much. And this animal is the **steenbok, thengonka**. This animal has got a **pair of straight very sharp little horns** and it knows how to use these horns upon a human being who is attacking it with a spear. **I have seen men killed by this little buck. It knows exactly where to stab the human being in order to paralyse him and kill him immediately.** It attacks you in the region of your waist where your kidneys are. I have seen it many times.

Even the gentle little **impala**, even the beautiful and graceful **springbok**, can kill a man or men when cornered. I have seen it. Now, what does all this mean? **It means that animals have laws.** It also means that each animal knows how to use its horns because it knows what shape those horns are. It knows how to use them efficiently and deadly effect. Now, what does this mean? **It means intelligence.** It means an awareness of pain and an awareness of death. Why would a steenbok stab a hunter so savagely knowing that it will kill him? Because it is a way of death, it thinks and it remembers. There is a **nasty word**, which western people, especially English speaking people, love to use when talking about animals. And this word is **instinct**. There is no such a thing as instinct. **There is only intelligence and all its forms.**

A warthog knows to kill a human being. It is aware of the human anatomy. A warthog will attack a human being **between the thighs**. Now why? It wants to stab that human being in the **femoral artery**. I have seen it many times. I have seen men badly wounded by this vicious form of wild pig, a beautiful massive creature, which moves with surprising speed when fighting for its life in the bush. An **elephant** has got two tusks but one of these tusks it uses for fighting and the other tusk is **a chisel for ring barking trees and also for digging up roots**. The elephant knows which tusk to use under which circumstances, which tells you that it thinks about all this.

Elephant and the Preacher

Again and again and again we are told by our grandparents and by our parents **that an elephant never forgets**, that if you did something good to an elephant it will remember you with gratitude but if you did something bad to it, it will remember you with anger. A story is told from the **land of the Zulus** of how there was a young man who was a leading hunter in the land of his people. **He was a good hunter.** And then one day this young hunter however threw a heavy spear at a young elephant and injured it in one of its hind legs. The elephant however managed to shake away the spear, which was not barbed, and it managed to escape into the depths of the bush **leaving the blooded spear on the ground for the hunter to retrieve.** **Many years went by** and the country changed and where before there was free veld and free bush there now was a **game reserve with a high fence** and human beings on the outside and animals on the inside.

Then one day during a drought, a **group of elephants managed to escape** out of the game reserve landing in the fields of a farmer, a type of story that has been told in South Africa hundreds of times. There came a fat **old man** with snow-white hair riding upon a donkey along a dead road outside the fence of the game reserve. The man was a **preacher**, assistant to a white missionary. He was elegantly togged up in a safari suit and a pith helmet. He wore a black shirt under his khaki jacket with a **snow-white preacher's collar** around his fat neck. And he was jogging along on the **back of the donkey** at peace with the world and at peace with his Maker. But not at peace with two angry eyes that suddenly turned and saw him in the distance. Before the poor man could do anything he suddenly saw a huge grey monster, charging at him across the mealie (corn)-field.

It was an elephant. The poor preacher jumped off the donkey, fell flat on his belly, got up and ran for dear life, or try to. Before he knew what was happening **he was up in the air having been grabbed by the right upper arm by a huge thing that he first thought was a gigantic snake but was in fact the trunk of the angry elephant.** Over his shoulder he saw one burning elephantine eye and **he saw recognition in that eye.** What can a poor human being in such a situation do? He did the only thing that is possible under these circumstances. He wetted his trousers in style. And then the elephant **took him, travelled with him, entered the game reserve and then almost gently placed him upon one of the branches of a very tall and thick marula tree.** It favoured him with one last angry glare from the corner of its eye before it ambled away deep into the game reserve.

Sometime later a group of men travelling in a lorry went by the dead road and they saw something big and fat high up on the branch of a marula tree. Help me! Luckily the men in the lorry were workers in the game reserve who were looking for the escaped elephants.

And after a few hours they managed to bring him down. *Hauw*, preacher asked one of them, how did you get up this tree? An elephant put me here. What? A wave of laughter swept over the men and because the poor man's donkey had been trampled by the elephant and two of its legs broken, the preacher was carried back to his home where for some hours he remained in a state of shock. He did not know why the elephant had done this to him. But the elephant did know and remembered.

Circus Elephant

Many years ago when I was a young man, we lived near the town of Randfontein in the West Rand in the Transvaal (Gauteng) Province. Next to where we lived were **three big goldmines** with hostels accommodating several hundred single men each, men from different places in Africa. Then one day a circus arrived in the vicinity and in this circus was a **number of Indian elephants**. And while the circus was preparing to perform, while the tents were being erected, an incident took place, which shocked everyone in the area.

A young man from the Transkei from the **Pondo** tribe approach one of the circus elephants from behind and **tried to pull off one of the thick tail hairs** from the beast. What happened next we were never really sure. The next moment the man was seized by the elephant in a huge cloud of dust. We heard him scream before he was dashed to the ground like a helpless doll and **then the elephant trampled** him. Before the circus people could react the man was being trampled to death, screaming horribly as women and children and men scattered in all directions, black and white, all united briefly by panic. Then the elephant **urinated upon its victim** as elephants do to ensure that the victim is well and truly dead. The man was dead. What happened to the elephant afterwards we never knew.

Dying Elephant

Elephants like all animals are **capable of love**, not of mere affection but of thinking, feeling love. Many times as I travelled through the bush I saw this with my own eyes and I also heard about it from other people in other parts of Africa. One day a herd of elephant was **drinking on the bank of a river** when one of them was suddenly and viciously attacked by a **hippopotamus**, which bit off part of its trunk.

Formidable as the elephant is it **becomes a weak and pathetic** animal when it has either **lost use of its trunk** through disease or when that trunk has been severed by a creature such as a hippopotamus. And thus it was that I saw the young elephant die while its mother screamed with grief and rage. The angry **elephant cow tried to attack the hippopotamus**, which avoided damage by simply diving deep into the river where the elephant could not go. Mad with grief the mother elephant turned its attention to its wounded offspring from whose severed trunk blood was fountaining darkly. The mother elephant **tried to comfort its child**. It tried to hold it upright as it sagged through loss of blood. And again and again the female elephant showed great agitation and grief, as did the other animals infected by her feeling. The wounded elephant was making terrible sounds of pain and I watched, a helpless witness from behind a rock on the slope of a hill.

Late in the afternoon the young elephant collapsed, **finally dying** in great agony. And then I say something that I had seen many times before. **The other elephants gathered around the dying creature and they tried to lift it onto its feet**. Its mother even brought a tuft of green vegetation, trying to make her offspring to eat. But it could not. And when the elephants finally realised that there was nothing they could do to save this young creature, they went into the surrounding bush and came back with **broken branches of young trees**, which they **threw onto the dead elephant**. Some time later the elephant herd moved away, leaving the dead one half-covered by green branches. And when after the creatures had all gone, I came down, a trembling, fat coward, to take a closer look at the dead elephant. I found for the countless time that **the elephants had not just broken branches from just about any tree that they came across**. They had deliberately **chosen trees**, which we know to have **medical properties**, trees whose bark we use for the treatment of diseases in the bush. There was a tree that we used for the treatment of **malaria**. Another tree was a tree whose bark we burn in the treatment of severe **headache** in the bush. Again and again during my travels I saw this that elephants when **symbolically burying one of their dead**, covered it with not just any tree that they come across. They carefully choose those trees that both they and human beings know are for the treatment of certain diseases.

For example, if an elephant dies within a border of a farm owned by a white man, a farm in which there are **fruit trees**, the elephants will not use one of these fruit trees to cover their dead one. They will choose wild **African trees** and only those, which have got powers of healing.

What are the animals trying to tell us? That **they know which trees are for healing and which are not** ? That they know which trees are foreign and which are native? My answer is yes, yes and yes again. Animals know much more than we give them credit for. Even birds have got intense feelings of love and when a bird loses its mate, it displays grief, which tells you of how deepened, how intense was the love that this bird held the dead one in.

Dying Bird

Once near my home in **Mafikeng**, I saw a dark blue bird travelling with its mate. These two birds made a nest not far from my home. And then one day the **female bird was killed** while nesting by a feral cat from the surrounding area. The cat not only killed the bird and **destroyed its eggs**; it also **destroyed the bird's nest** for some reason known to itself. And when the male bird returned and found its mate gone with nothing but blooded dark blue feathers marking what had happened and where. **The grief that the male bird displayed** brought tears into our eyes. Day after day the bird sat upon the tree where its wife's nest had been, again and again calling out in bird language. Then after some weeks the bird disappeared hopefully to find another mate and hopefully to build another nest.

Animals know love, not affection but true love. They know love not only for each other but also for human beings as well. **I have seen animals of different kinds showing affection and love to animals of another kind.** I have seen dogs befriend cats and defend them against any enemy attacking them. One day two mongrel dogs got locked in a furious fight when one of the mongrels chased one of my cats up a tree. My old mongrel, *Spookie*, went for the intruder, tooth and nail, and there was a terrific dogfight, which only ended when the loser, my Spookie, decided to turn tail and run away from that private war. He had fought and had part of his left ear bitten off in defence of a cat.

Man-eating Lion in Kenya

There are many stories, which I can tell you, but let me tell you this one. It was in **Kenya** many years ago and we were hunting what our **bwanas** had been **falsely told by cattle-keepers was a man-eating lion**. The cattle-keepers had lied in order to ensure the destruction of this lion, which had eaten some of their cattle over a number of months. In those **days before the Second World War**, if white hunters heard about a man-eating lion anywhere they went after it, rifle, shotgun and binoculars without any questions asked. Those were the days when the bloody-handed hunter was regarded as a hero, a real macho man, a real **bwana makubwa**, great lord.

The white hunters came upon the male lion and **they killed it** although some of my friends told me clearly that **this lion was not a man-eater because a man-eating lion is a lion whose teeth are beginning to get rotten**. The dead lion had a beautiful set of teeth, strong fangs and powerful maulers. There lay the lion dead at the feet of its human enemies and on the back of a diamond tea truck behind a canvas canopy peering out into the world like the coward that he is was a certain man called Credo Mutwa. He wanted to play save because a few weeks before he had seen a man been killed by a buffalo. So Mutwa had taken insurance against losing his fat hide by keeping to the back of a truck and off the ground. **Sometimes it is very wise to be a coward** because what happened a few moments after the great lion had been killed was a great lesson.

Some distance away from where we were was a dense clump of bush over very tall sun dried grass. One of the men decided to go and investigate that bush for some reason. **The lion had been caught in the open all by himself and had been shot then**. But now one of the hunters decided that there was something in the dense bush, which he had to investigate. He was walking towards that bush when, like a canon shot, something huge and golden and utterly ferocious erupted out of the brownish greenery straight at him. I don't know what happened then. I lay on my cowardly belly at the back of the truck trembling and wetting myself although I was quite save from any damage. There are things in life that happen involuntarily and wetting yourself when danger approaches is one of these.

I heard screams, shouts and a **huge fusillade of rifle fire**. And then silence, broken occasionally by the **rumbling sounds of a dying beast** and by the faint screams of a mortally wounded man. When I finally found courage to get down from the truck onto the ground men were moving about and a sin of fearful carnage greeted my eyes. A **lioness** had erupted from the bush and sprang straight at the man walking towards that bush. What I saw I leave to your imagination.

Africa is sometimes a brutal place where death occurs within the blink of an eye and death and mutilation in the hot African sun freezes the blood of even the bravest of the brave. I saw such things many times, before this one and since that. Afterwards as we sat around a campfire, we began to talk about the whole thing. We, **the Africans**, the white men were far away, drinking liquor and talking in muted voices because there is something very subduing about a death in the African bush. People realize **how fragile life is** and how passing it is like a cloud in the skies of my motherland.

This was very strange said *Sahido*, the leading **Askari**. Why did the lioness do what she did? She was safe in the bush; she could have remained hidden. But **why did she show herself**? We don't know. We are not lions answered another man with a hard smile. It is best that you ask a lion that question, *Sahido*. Wait, said *Sahido*. Did you not know, *Iswhita*, that **the lioness had cubs**, that she had milk within her? I noticed, *Sahido*, I said. Well, let me tell you, I went into that bush later **and I found two cubs**, small ones. The lioness had died leaving behind two cubs, **cubs which would now die** because when lion cubs lose their mother at an early age, they do not survive. But Why, I asked? Why did the lioness do that? Nobody answered the question but as I lay in the canvas tent some hours later with African moonlight pouring like a blessing all over the sun dried land, the answer came to me. **The lioness had seen her mate been killed**. The cattle keepers had deliberately lied telling us that the lion whom they called a man-eater was a nomadic lonely lion, when in fact **it was a lion with a mate**. In other words this was a hunting lion who was travelling with its mate who did most of the hunting because with lions it is the female who does the hunting not the male. So the lioness had seen human beings murdering her husband and she had deliberately abandon life in order to go where her husband had gone.

The Sangoma and Hyaena

Animals know the meaning of love, not just affection but love. Animals know loyalty. **Animals reward friendship.** One day a Zulu *sangoma* was **digging medicinal roots illegally** in a prohibited place in Zululand. He had to make a living and so he did this by digging up and selling roots and bulbs, which were **used as a medicine.** Then all of a sudden, this day of all days, **the man was attacked by a pack of baboons.** They came at him like an ugly dark-grey and stinking tide. They showered him with broken sticks and rocks. He ran for his life and try to climb a tree but not before one of the apes had seized him by his trouser leg and torn the trouser leg off him.

There was the *sangoma* in the tree **surrounded by a pack of hostile baboons.** A baboon can be very, very **vicious** and as with human beings its viciousness is accompanied by cold intelligence. The baboons were moving in a circle around the tree in which the *sangoma* was and they knew the one piece of bush logic that that which goes up a tree must inevitably come down. And so they were waiting. Then out of nowhere there **arrived a saviour to save the sangoma's life.** And the saviour was truly an unlikely one. It was a huge **brown hyaena**, which did something, which hyaenas never do. **It went for the baboons** and really saw them off in style, **killing one** of them with its terrible fangs before disappearing into the distance.

Some time later the *sangoma* returned to his home and told his wives about what had happened. He was in such a **state of shock** because when the baboon tore his trouser leg off him, it also managed to scratch one of his buttocks very painfully. And so his great wife had been busy with an old trowel. She had heated the trowel, builder's trowel in the fire, and had **cauterised the baboon scratches**, which added pain to injury. Well, he did it again, did he not, said the woman to the *Sangoma*? Who did what, ask the *sangoma*, his buttock throbbing like a battle drum with pain? Well, **that was your hyaena my friend**, said the woman. Don't you remember that **he has saved your life before?** My hyaena, said the *sangoma* in puzzlement?

Then he remembered that when he was a young boy **he had founded a wounded hyaena** in the bush and had brought it home and had given it love and had **kept it illegally** of course in a spare granary at the back of the homestead. The hyaena had grown and afraid of the law, the *sangoma* **had released the half grown hyaena back into the bush.** That hyaena was to return the *sangoma's* life on three strange occasions by saving his life, once **from a python** and on a second time from the baboons. And the last time the hyaena came into the man's life, was when he saved him from two human attackers who had beaten him up with sticks **accusing him of being a sorcerer** and were preparing to burn him alive. The hyaena appeared running towards the attackers.

It was now old and was limping on one leg but the sight of the great beast was enough to send the attackers backing. **Out of Africa do come many strange tales and this story is true, every word of it.** Animals know love. Animals think, learn and feel, whether they are inside a circus or whether they are roaming free in the African bush.

Elephant Tail Hairs

Now I told you about a **pondo** who had been trampled to death by a circus elephant many, many years ago. Why did the *pondo* do such a **stupid thing as trying to pluck out a tail hair from an Indian elephant's tail**? Well, according to African culture **if you want power and protection**, you must **take something from a living creature**.

In olden days warriors **use to take feathers from living birds**. They used to capture a bird or trick the bird somehow, rob it of one of its feathers and then let it go, whether that bird was a vulture, an eagle or even an ostrich. Now, our people throughout Africa believe that **the hairs of an elephant possess very great magical power**. And the **power is even greater**, we believe, if one **wears the bangle made from the tail hairs of a living elephant** and not a dead one. The young *pondo* had been a faction fighter in his tribe land and he wanted **protection against his many enemies** and he tried to take it from a living elephant according to traditional law, which was the very last thing he did on this earth.

Crocodile Teeth, Hippo - and Elephant Tusks

If you **fight against a crocodile in a river** and you managed to **knock one of the crocodile's teeth out** sending the crocodile fleeing, it is said that you **must take that tooth, pierce it and wear it around your neck** and you shall be protected for all time, so long as the crocodile that you took it from was **still alive** in the water.

If **two hippos had been fighting** and one succeeds in **breaking the tusk** of another one you must take that tusk and pierce it and wear it around your neck, heavy as it is because that would protect you.

And we believe that **there is no charm more powerful than a charm made out of a piece of ivory**, which is part of a tusk, which had been **broken off when two elephants were fighting**.

There you are, next time you hear people saying that animals have no feelings, **please ask that person to come to Africa and walk through Africa, preferably barefoot**, and they shall know, whoever they are, that Africa is a **strange country full of love and full of pathos as it is full of happiness**.

Listen to the Earth and Stars

This is what I call a very special story, which is made in humble dedication to my **late wife Cecilia Mutwa** who used to love and adore the subject, discussed here.

The title of this story is: *listen to the earth, listen to the stars*.

First and foremost, our people believed that the earth was a **living thing**, that the earth was not just a thing of rocks, of rivers, of mountains, valleys, plains and seas.

The earth was something which was alive. The great **thinkers** of our people used to have a saying, which goes *okupilayo kuweza okupilayo*. And this saying in the Zulu language means *that which is alive brings forth that which is alive*. In old Africa our people were obsessed with the belief that the earth was a **living entity**, that it felt **pain**, that it felt **joy**, that it could also feel **deadly anger**.

So ingrained within the African soul was **this belief**, that Africans used to do a strange thing that was not done, as far as I know, by any other people anywhere in the world, even in **ancient times**. When Africans needed metal of any kind, metal such as copper, tin, silver, gold and even iron, they used to create mines, some of them of at a very great depth. They used to work **these mines** until the metal was almost, but not quite, exhausted.

Then there would come a day, which was known as the **healing of the mother**, *ukulapa unina*. This was an important day in which **feasting** was mingled with **weeping**. This was the day when hundreds of men and women would assemble from all over the land, **regardless** of tribe and they would perform an extremely amazing task - **the closing of the mine**. When white prospectors travelled through South Africa, they came across ancient mines which Africans had worked, and all these mines had either been partially or completely refilled. The refilling of a mineshaft was a task that used to take **several months**.

During that time, intertribal **hostility** and inter-clan **feuding** and quarrelling was strictly forbidden. Everybody had to perform the strange task of healing the earth mother of the injury that human beings in their greed and their need had inflicted upon her. Before the mine was closed, **volunteers** used to go down the mine and **await their death**, a horrible death of being crushed by falling stones.

They would sit there and their brothers and sisters on the surface would push large quantities of loose earth and rock upon them, refilling the mine. That is why in many instances when archaeologists reopened some of the ancient mines in South Africa, they used to find **skeletons** at the bottom of the mine.

These were people, men and women, who sacrificed themselves in order to **placate** the great earth mother. After the mine had been refilled, a **white cow** was sacrificed on top of the site.

And then the people went away. If there was a river nearby, the people, young and old, male and female, used to go into the river and **bathed there**, cleansing the dust away from themselves and then with songs and with drumming return back to their homes and **resume their daily lives**.

What South African archaeologists do not know is this: whenever the archaeologists came across an ancient mine, which had not been refilled, that mine had not been created by black people, but by **foreigners**; Phoenicians, Arabs and other people who came to South Africa and other parts of Africa in **search of gold**.

There was more to this obsessive worshipping of the earth, much more. When a tribe was settled in a place, there were men and women who were known as the **listeners to the earth**, they who listened to the earth. These were men and women, usually **families and generations** of people doing one thing over many years and their task was to observe very, very carefully what was happening in the **environment** in the **tribe's territory**.

They used to observe **which trees** were becoming **extinct** in the area; which plants, bulbs, roots or whatever was no longer in existence. If it was found that many plants, which had been growing in the area that the tribe had settled in, in early times, were now no longer in existence, then the tribe had to prepare to move in order to give the earth a rest. It was one of the duties of an **African King** to travel through each part of his empire, **eating** wild plants, **tasting** whatever fruits the land provided and **drinking** water from all the streams that flowed through the empire. A king had to **know the taste** of every river that flowed through his land, every stream, every pool and every lake, he had to **ritually taste** the water from there. One day at the height of his rule, **King Shaka** travelled the length and the breadth of the former Natal Province and wherever he went he ritually tasted the water that is to be found in that place. He did it exactly as a wine taster does.

First a **clean calabash** was given to the king and the water from a stream was scooped into this calabash and the king had to **smell the water**. And then the king had to sip the water and keep it in his mouth, **savouring it** and **even listening** spiritually to it. Should the king find a strange taste in the stream, a taste which was not there before, a **deep investigation** had to be launched to find out why this stream now tasted as it was now tasting. Shaka travelled from the **North of Zululand** right down the map. It was a journey, which took him almost a **whole year** accompanied by his attendance and his warriors. He ritually tasted the water of every river that flowed through the land of the Zulus until he came to a place where the water tasted **amazingly good**; the water was so pure. It was like music against the great king's pallet.

Shaka called that place *amanzimtoti*, a name, which the place still bears to this day, **the land of the pure, good tasting waters**.

Then he came to another place where there was a river but where there was so much mud that the **hooves** of the king's cattle were often sucked deep into the mud with the result that the beasts had to **struggle** to free themselves of the clinging mud. King Shaka named this place *ixobo*, which is a word imitative of the **sound** that a cow's leg makes as it **frees itself from the mud**.

It was very, very important to **listen to the earth**, to observe any change in the environment, however small. Our people believed that if you see a small change in the environment, if you see one or two plants which used to grow there, no longer growing there, you must know that there is a big evil spirit at large in the land and you mustn't just say that the loss of those plants is a small thing. Our people used to say **nothing is small** in the chest of the earth mother, everything is important.

There is overwhelming evidence that in the **last sixty years or so**, the environment in southern Africa has undergone a definite change and this change is **extremely complex**, deep-rooted and dangerous. Firstly, it has been noticeable during the lifetime of a person of my age, that the **rainfall pattern** in South Africa has definitely undergone **a change**.

Rains used to fall in the **month of July** in this country, which is why our people had a name for July, which means the **month of the first rains**. Today the rains have become later and later and later and sometimes freak weather storms occur throughout South Africa. Some years ago we had a heavy **snowfall** in South Africa during the month of October, which is the month of deep summer, the month in which our people used to celebrate the **first harvest**. We have had **strange heat waves** and these heat waves have wrought dramatic changes in animal as well as human behaviour. During these heat waves I have noticed, **crime increases** dramatically in South Africa, crime of violence, murder, rape and other forms of negative behaviour. Drivers become more aggressive on the roads. Criminals become more vicious and more pitiless towards their victims. There is definitely something in the air.

But let me tell you more.

Amongst the people who were known as the watchers of the earth were men and women with **good memories** who used to listen to the thunder during a thunderstorm and **imitate** its sound accurately. These people, one of whom is my **aunt Mina**, who is a hundred and three years old, angrily confirm that the sound of thunder in today's thunderstorms is **totally different** from the sound of thunder for example during the 1930's. My aunt, Mina, says that there is now an **angry sound** to the thunder of today's thunderstorms, an electric sound, which was not there before. And when she imitates the thunder that she knew as a girl and imitates today's thunder it is a wonder to listen to her. She says that the thunder of olden times, in the 1930's and the 20's, had a **fertile sound** to it, a pregnant hollow sound. And this what she says it sounded like: *Du-du-du-du-whaaa*. But she says that today the **thunder is different**.

It has a snarling quality to it and this is how she imitates it: *Ka-ka-ka-ka-ka-whaaa*. And she is right, she is quite right.

Africans have strange ways of dealing with strange things. When a child or a highly strung man or woman shows a natural fear of thunder and lightning and becomes a nervous wreck during a thunderstorm, then our people treat this person in an interesting way. They take an **empty, clean basin** (in ancient times it used to be a bowl made of clay) and they put it outside during a thunderstorm. On the following day, the basin full of rainwater, is taken to the person who is afraid of the thunder and they are ordered to drink.

This is called **drinking the thunder, drinking the lightning**.

We believe that if somebody **ingests something** he becomes less afraid of it. So if a nervous person drinks rainwater, which has come as a result of a thunderstorm, then that person will become less afraid of the thunderstorm. For many years my aunt Mina was such a person. As a child she had seen relatives of hers killed when lightning struck a hut and that trauma filled her with fear of thunderstorms for many years. So over the years she fought to rid herself of this fear by **drinking water** from a thunderstorm. Mina says, and I fully agree with her, that the taste of rainwater has changed in the last fifty years or so. She says that rainwater now has a **strange bitter taste** upon the pallet.

She has an old dish of clay with which she receives rainwater at nearly every thunderstorm. She puts this dish outside, covered with a cloth to ensure that no dirt should enter with the rainwater and the rainwater filters through this cloth. When she drinks the water, she says in strange Zulu that the water **tastes of motorcar** and she calls it the urine of the motorcar. A taste, which was not there before and many old people of her **age agree with her** that the taste of the rain of our country has altered. Furthermore, the same kind of change is found when these old people eat snow from some of our country's highest mountains, for example the Drakensberg Mountains. They all say that the water in the snow as well as the rainwater has **changed in taste**.

Mina also says that some of our rivers, such as the **Tugela River** and especially the *Msoendusi* River, taste of **dirty oil and dirt metal**. I fully agree with these old people. Our country has undergone a dangerous change **climatically** and something must be done about this immediately. I wish that those of our country in authority would speak to these ancient people whose duty was to taste the rain, to listen to the thunder, to listen to the earth and to listen to the stars.

Stars and Extraterrestrial Life

One of my students is a big woman called Nobela. Nobela belongs to the Mandebele tribe and the **Mandebele** people are **professional watchers of the stars**. They have astrologists and astronomers without peer in southern Africa but nobody has bothered to record this important fact.

Some of the designs for which the Mandebele people are known, designs which they create on their beadwork and which they paint on the walls of their houses, are actually **representations** of some of the **constellations** in the sky and also some of the most important stars in the heavens. They love to portray the **daystar** as well as the **evening star** in different colours.

The Mandebele people make a very strange statement, namely that there are stars, which used to be in the heavens in very ancient times which are **no longer there** and which have **gone away**.

The Mandebeles make another amazing statement.

They worship and honour the **Orion constellation** and whenever they want to know what the **weather** will be on the day following, they watch the stars of **this** constellation. Should there be a **slight haze** around each one of the **stars**, the Mandebeles will tell you that there **will be rain or cold** on the following day and they are usually correct. They say that the Orion constellation, which they call the *amagulube* or *amagalube* has **shifted its** position in the sky and is no longer there were it used to be two thousand years ago.

Furthermore, they say that there was once a **red star** in the sky close to the *magulube* constellation, which is no longer there. I've asked myself many times what could cause a star to vanish from the heavens.

The Mandebeles make an even stranger statement. They say that some of the stars in the sky are not stars at all, but were **specially created** by the gods to **guide the souls** of the dead to heaven. And they also say that whenever a holy person or a great chieftain or king dies, the gods put up a **star in the sky** to receive the soul of the dead person and take it to the land of the gods. The belief that some of the stars in the sky were specially created and are not stars at all, deeply intrigues me because every thinking person knows that there are intelligent entities out there in space.

No one but the most thick-headed of sceptics can deny this. Let us imagine that there is a star spinning civilization with capability to travel from one constellation to the next or even from one galaxy to the next.

What problem would this civilization face?

Well the same problem that the earliest voyagers upon earth's oceans were confronted by: **how to find your way** through the vastness of the ocean, the location of the nearest friendly city or seaport. What did ancient people do to solve this problem? They **created lighthouses**. They created things such as the **Colossus of Rhodes** and the **great Pharaoh's lighthouse in Alexandria**.

A star empire would have to create beacons in space to guide its many ships towards friendly planets. If one is in the centre of a galaxy it is so easy to get lost for all time especially if your ship becomes crippled in some accident. So there must be beacons to guide you towards friendly shores and those beacons would have to be the size of stars.

As you know, the people of Africa believed that stars are **givers of knowledge**. In the language of some African tribes, a star is called the knowledge-giver, the enlightenment-giver. The **Batswana** people call a star *Naledi*. This word means the giver of enlightenment, not just physical light but knowledge symbolized by light. The **Zulus** call a star *Nkanyezi*. Again the word means **the one who gives enlightenment**.

In my travels to many parts of Africa both during and after the Second World War and long after that, I came across many tribes who firmly believe that many **aspects of knowledge** that human beings possess came from the stars.

All over West Africa, from Nigeria right to Sierra Leone, you'll find the belief that **the idea of kingship** came from the heavens, that kingship came from the gods of the stars. The same idea was found in ancient **Sumeria** and ancient **Egypt**, the same idea was found amongst the **Native Americans** and other ancient people throughout the world.

Why would people believe such a strange thing? What is very interesting is that when you ask **storytellers** to describe to you those so-called gods from the sky who brought knowledge to the earth, they describe to you creatures, usually female, with tall bodies, long limbs and naturally large bald heads, creatures with beautiful faces and pointed ears. These are the *galube*, creatures that the **Mandebelle** people and people of other tribes believe **inhabit the three stars** that forms **Orion's belt**. Another race of extraterrestrial creatures that is associated with **bringing the law** from the sky down to human beings, are our friends, the *mantidane*, the so-called grey aliens.

Another **extraterrestrial race** which is believed to have brought knowledge to the earth are the so-called *nodics*, tall pink-skinned, blond-head humanoids. Everywhere, in the remotest jungles of the Amazon, in the darkest forest in central Africa, you hear the strange story that **man was given knowledge by gods from the stars**. Knowledge of what? Of **making fire** and of **smelting certain metals** and **forming alloys** out of these metals.

I was trained in my many initiations as a ritual blacksmith. During this training I was told many things; that the **mixing of tin with copper** and other metals to create bronze was a secret that the gods of the sky gave to people whom they favoured on this earth. Also, that the **smelting of gold** was a secret taught to our people by gods from the stars who had a use for gold which we no longer know the exact nature of.

Our people were told that if a king wanted to communicate with the gods of the stars, he had to wear on his head a **headband** or even a **helmet**, sometimes fitted with horns made out of gold or a mixture of gold and iron. You see such a helmets still been worn by kings in West Africa even today, **exactly the same** type of horned-helmet, which was worn by ancient, **Sumerian kings**.

Our people also tell us strange stories that there was a time when the earth was struck by a **fearsome cataclysm**, when the sky was filled with **dust** and **deadly fumes** for many generations. The stories say that after that, every river on earth was poisoned. There were no edible plants for human beings to eat. It is said that out of the sky came the *galube* female gods and they taught people to **build structures** for **purifying** the poisoned waters of the rivers.

It is also said that there was a time when the earth was struck by a fearsome cataclysm brought about by a **huge comet** that fought a battle against mother earth and came close to destroying her. It is said that millions of animals and human beings perished and the only survivors were those who were able to seek safety in the wombs of the deepest caves that were available in the land.

It is said that for many generations the sky **was dark with dust and fire and poisonous fumes**. People only survived by drinking the water, which dripped within the great caves. We are told that caves such as the **Sudwala** caves in the former Eastern Transvaal and caves such as the Sterkfontein caves in Johannesburg, these became the refuge of the pathetic survivors of the human race. We are told that out of the heavens came the great *galube* female gods, tall female creatures with long arms and long legs, with huge yellow eyes with black split pupils, beautiful noses and lips and pointed ears.

These star women took pity upon the human race and taught our ancestors how to build structures to purify water in the poisoned rivers and how to **create edible food** out of the many poisonous plants, which had grown during the cataclysm. We are further told that the *galube* goddesses taught human beings the **secret of making fire**, which is why the **technique** of fire making **is the same** in many parts of Africa where you go.

It is also said that the *galube* gave great wisdom about the universe to our ancestors and ancestresses. Promising to return whenever humanity was in trouble, the beautiful silver skinned goddesses of the stars, returned to the heavens from whence they had come. It is also said that after the goddesses had gone back home, wise human beings spoke to the heavens again.

Wise human beings used to plant crops and **create messages** in these gardens by cutting down certain plants in the gardens to form **visible patterns**, patterns which could be seen from the air. And the gods of the heavens saw these patterns and responded.

In one instance, there was a **pattern** made by human beings on the **edge of a cornfield** and on the following day the great goddesses responded by leaving a message of their own right in the **centre** of the cornfield. And to this day we are told the process still goes on with the goddesses of the sky leaving messages for us in **corn-, wheat- and mealiefields**. These are known today by modern people as **crop circles**. These crop circles are nothing more, nothing less than messages sent down to us by the entities in the sky who expect a polite response but today receive none.

It is said that at one time, the gods of the sky sent another race of creatures to teach humanity and these were the *nomo* or the *ngomo*. The *ngomo* were **lizard-like creatures** who looked like monitor lizards. They swam in water and they came and **taught us about religion**. They landed somewhere in Africa and they released a lot of water for their ship to **float upon**.

Then they summoned the people to gather around and when the tribe's people were all around the alien ship, the *nomo* spoke to the people telling them about the fact that every living entity, whether human or *nomo*, had within it an undying part of itself, **the soul**. The *nomo* told the black people that people on this earth were actually in a **state of exile** having been condemned to come down to this planet and serve a sentence **for offences which their ancestors had committed** while they dwelt amongst the stars.

We are told that the *nomo* told the people that because human beings were so greedy, power-hungry and aggressive, they had been banished from the heavens and brought down to this earth, which we now know as our home. The *nomo* told the people that if human beings can **stop fighting**, if humans can **combat disease**, ignorance and war, then they would qualify for **readmission** to the lands of the gods.

It is said that when the *nomo* were about to depart, they did a strange thing. They took one of their *nomo*, and they laid it upon a **flat rock**. It offered itself as victim to the strange ritual, which was to follow. They used a knife to cut out the creature's living heart and to hold it up to the sky and then put the heart on a **golden plate**. They then they cut up the dead creature, chopping it into little pieces and they gave the pieces to the assembled tribe's people as a strange sacrament. But they left one of the dead creature's hands or paws and out of this mutilated paw they recreated the creature again using their fearsome magic.

You must know, said the leading *nomo* to the people, that there is no greater thing that an intelligent creature can do than to **give its life** for the salvation of fellow creatures. In this way did the *nomo* instil into human beings an alien belief, which became the foundation stone of many of our religions, the sacrificing of a sacred person unto the **redemption** of people's sins.

In this way did the *nomo* preach to our people a belief, which spread throughout Africa, a belief which was soon found even amongst the most out of the way of African races and tribes, the belief in a god who dies for us and comes back miraculously to life again. When the first missionaries came to Africa, they came with the belief in Christ; a gentle God who died that human beings might be freed of sin, a God who died and was resurrected.

But the irony was this: that every tribe in Africa where the missionaries came already believed in a god who dies and is born again; they already believed in a god the father, god the mother and god the son. Sometimes the trinity consisted of three male gods or three female gods and a father god, a mother god and a son or daughter god. For example in **Nigeria** there is a female Christ figure, known as *Gabadu*. *Gabadu*, came from the stars, sent by *Mauo*, the great earth mother, to free human beings of ignorance and of sin. *Gabadu* travelled through Africa we are told in the mouth of a **great python**, a python which energetically **gouged great depressions** in the landscape as it moved from country to country, from place to place, taking the queen of redemption to the lands of many tribes.

It is said that at the end of her travels, *Gabadu* came to the land, which was ruled by a **mad king**. And when she tried to preach to the mad monarch, the king was so angered, so filled with guilt and rage that he held his sword at the beautiful goddess and decapitated her. Then he laughingly told the head of the goddess:

“Can you preach now? Can you tell your lies to me and my people?”

And the goddess’s body crawled along the ground, caught the decapitated head by the hair and restored it to its rightful place **between her shoulders**.

Then rising taller and more beautiful than ever before, *Gabadu* sang. She sang about love, about the respect of human being for human being, human being for beast, human being for the whole earth; she sang that human beings and animals were actually one. And she sang so well that the people cried and worshipped her while the **wicked king fell down dead** and was soon covered with carrion worms from head to foot.

Constellations & Other Heavenly Things

Let me tell you about the stars. The people of Africa know about the various constellations although they call them by names different from those by which they are known amongst western people and eastern people. But sometimes you find **great similarities**. For example our people believe in the zodiac but unlike the twelve-character zodiac with which the western people are familiar, the African zodiac has **thirteen or fifteen** characters. For example in the African zodiac there is a whale; there are two dolphins; there is the witch of the broom, which corresponds with the western character Virgo. There is the firebird, which corresponds with Aquarius, but also there is the boatman of the gods, which also corresponds with Aquarius.

And then our people have got these other constellations. There is the *Nganyaba*, the **great snake**, which is known as Draco by white people. Then there is the **exiled lion**, a very important constellation to African mystics; this is the constellation known as Leo by our people. The exiled lion is said to be a **friend and a companion** of the constellation *Matsiyeng*, which is **Orion**.

And then there is a constellation, which our people call the **great river**, *Umfugazi*. I do not know what is the western equivalent of this constellation, which is slightly to **one side of the Milky Way**. Then we have got a constellation called the **wizard**, *umtakagati*. Again I cannot find a western equivalent of this constellation. Now amongst the planets we find the day star and the evening star which Africans used to mistakenly think were two separate entities. Then we find the **old goat star**, a very important star, which is actually the **planet Jupiter**.

Then we have got a star, which our people call the **village eldest star**, the very old man star; this is the **planet Saturn**. Our people recognise the existence of **six** planets in the sky which are called **stars that move** or the **visitors**.

Sometimes you shall find that one star has visited a constellation. For example, the old goat star, **Jupiter**, will sometimes be found to have visited the village of the water maiden which is **Virgo**. Or it has visited the village of the **Crab**. These visits are said to be very **important** astrologically according to African culture. But there are things that happen in heaven which are extremely important to the people of Africa throughout this continent.

There is a star, a fearsome star, which Basoeto speaking Africans call *musosonono* and the Zulus call *umshanelo*, which means the **broom that sweeps away** and also *umsosonono*.

Now what is the meaning of the word *mushosonono*?

It is a double word, although today many black people no longer know its exact meaning, but **mystics** do. The word *mushosonono* consists of two words, *musho musho*, which means the **one who says or the one who announces** and then the last word is *shonono*. *Shonono* means **much perishing**.

The Zulu and the Sotho word *shono* or *shouna*, means **to go down into death** or to go down underground, to sink to perish. So the name of a comet in both Zulu and Sotho and Tswana means the **one who announces great perishing**. In other words, the announcer of cataclysm, the announcer of the dying of many people. Now not so long ago there was in South African skies the well-known comet known as **Halley's comet**, a comet which when it first appeared over South African skies in recorded history in the early years of the twentieth century, filled a large part of the heavens with its **amazing tail**. But when Halley's comet returned to our country's skies, two decades or slightly more ago, it had become **smaller**, it had shrunk and was almost **unnoticeable** in the skies.

Sangomas and shamans and African thinkers were deeply worried about this. They believed that the great *mushosonono*, which had announced the coming of the 1914-1918 war and the 1918 flu epidemic, had been engaged in a battle far out in space against a **fearsome star-monster** and had its tail and part of its substance **devoured** by this creature.

One other thing that Africans always watch out for and used to watch out for very strictly were the **various solar** as well as the **lunar eclipses** in the sky. There is a particularly fearsome kind of lunar eclipse, which fills even the bravest of African star watcher with unease. It is when the moon goes into **eclipse, giving it a red tinge**. This is known as the un-virgin-ing of the moon. Our stories say that during these times the moon goddess gets pursued, caught and raped by the great *Nkanyamba*, **serpent of darkness**. She gets raped and she bleeds and her blood stains the sky. And after such an eclipse, dramatic events never fail to happen, events involving not only Africa but other **countries of the world**.

I will not bother you with details of previous eclipses except to tell you this.

Early in 1997, there occurred a lunar eclipse of this kind and all the **sangomas** with whom I was working said that a great queen or king would pass away. It was true. Princess Diana died tragically after this great un-virgin-ing of the moon. And oddly enough she was named after the European moon goddess Diana and she died in a place, which in ancient times was the sight of bloody human sacrifices to the **moon goddess**. Recently we witnessed a similar eclipse. Again the sky was tinged with red; so was the moon itself. And shortly thereafter there was murdered an African president, Laurent Kabila, leader of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. But I think this **is not** the major event that is foretold by this eclipse.

I think a **bigger event** is yet to come and it might involve an **Eastern or Middle Eastern** country. And further in July of this year we are expecting a major **solar eclipse** and may I point out to you that anyone who has studied the mystical side of South African history will tell you that major solar eclipses in southern Africa are always followed by **incidents of violence**. And sometimes the violence **precedes the eclipse** and sometimes it **follows** it.

In 1825, after terrible wars unleashed by king Shaka against the *ndwandwe* people, there fled from Zululand two kings, *Ngaba* and *Zwankendaba*. *Zwankendaba* and *Ngaba* crossed the **Zambezi River** in fleets of dugout canoes exactly as the eclipse was taking place and some of the people in the canoes **broke a taboo**, which said that whenever the sun god was hiding himself in shame people had to look down and never up at the sun. Many looked up and were **blinded for life** as a result.

And shortly after that eclipse **king Shaka was assassinated**. Shaka had tried to use the great eclipse to **re-unify** his disintegrating empire. Many Zulu warriors together with their great generals had steadily been defecting from Shaka to join his **half-brother Mbande**. Suddenly Shaka found that all his greatest regiments **were gone**, having fled in their hundreds to join Mbande and Mbande was becoming more powerful than Shaka himself.

Now let me tell you this. In **1997** there occurred a **total eclipse** of the sun over South Africa. I witnessed it in a valley in KwaZulu-Natal. I was badly injured at that time. I narrowly escaped with my life during the bloody unrest of 1976. In 1977, there was an eclipse and the violence in South Africa took a turn for the worse.

Other violent events occurred in other parts of Africa and now my heart is most uneasy about what **will precede and follow** the coming solar eclipse. And for this reason I have asked my fellow sangomas to hold three months of traditional prayer starting April, May and June. What further makes me uneasy is that the year 2001 is viewed by African sages as a **female year** where the year 2000 had been regarded as a male year.

The year **1976**, in which great violence erupted in South Africa and the year 1966, in which there was violence and violence which culminated in the killing of **Dr. H.F Verwoerd**, was **also a female year**. So was the year 1960 and 1963. We can only pray and praying we can only hope.

Now let me talk about one kind of star or rather **space object** which Africans find very fascinating and which they attach great **spiritual meaning** to. These are **meteorites**, which we sometimes see streaking across the heavens towards the earth. Our people believe that meteorites are **human souls** returning to earth from the stars after having ended their period of reincarnation as star beings. They are returning to earth to begin their cycle of reincarnation once again. First they shall be reborn as **fishes**; then they shall be reborn as **land animals**, then as **human beings**, then as **birds**, then as **stars** once more and then back again as **meteorites**.

And lastly, talking about stars and other heavenly things, who can forget our beautiful sister **the moon**, the lovely goddess who gives birth to herself every time every month. We are told that although the sky at night is full of fearsome creatures, although the sky at night often shows threatening comets and angry stars, the human heart must always take hope because no matter how **angry the night or dark**, there is always the **beautiful moon**, *inyanga*.

She is called *inyanga*, **the healer**, by the **Zulus** and she is called *gwedo*, the **remover of illness** by the **Batswana**. Some call her *mwedi*, a beautiful word which really means the **pleasant back scratcher**, the one who scratches people's backs and lights the lamp of hope in their hearts.

Our people used to believe that children should be begotten at night, that if you wanted to make a son that you had to go with your wife out into the moonless night and there, **under a great thorn tree**, make the child you seek. But if you wish to make a **girl**, you must make her under the light of the full moon so that the girl child can grow fat and beautiful like the moon with the wisdom and all the cunning that our shining sister, the queen of the heavens, possesses. One of the symbols that Africans have of the moon is that of **a women crouching** with a baby emerging from between her thighs. The whole image forms **a crescent**, the goddess giving birth to herself.

