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The Practical Power of the Shaman

By Keith Varnum

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Spirit of shamanism brings harmony and magic into everyday life

Shamanism is a very practical spirituality. A modern-day shaman could live next door to you and the only clues you might have are that they get along well with people and animals and have a green thumb with plants. Also, shamans have a knack for putting people at ease and for saying and doing the right thing at the right time. In his book, Urban Shaman, Serge Kahili King defines a shaman as "a healer of relationships, between mind and body, between people, between people and circumstances, between humans and Nature and between matter and spirit."

If you have a taste of divine ecstasy, shamanism can teach you how to ground it, how to bring it into your everyday life through using your natural gifts and talents. Shamanism can support you in translating that experience, that creative energy, into physical form so it can benefit yourself and everyone around you. The essence of shamanism is not an esoteric, mysterious, ritualistic tradition which can only be practiced by native peoples in a tribal environment. This ancient spiritual perspective on life is a down-to-earth, pragmatic, realistic way of living that anyone can use anywhere, anytime, including in our modern world.

Currently across the planet, the sacred knowledge of the shaman or wizard is being translated into everyday street language in order to create more healthy, harmonious and enriching lives for people. The spirit of shamanism is more of an open, flexible attitude and approach to living than a rigid set of rules,

formulas and techniques. Applying the basic principles of shamanism opens people to new possibilities and options for dealing with modern daily challenges.

From Alaska to the Andes, from Tibet to Tanzania, shamanism is a worldwide phenomenon. Virtually every religion has its roots in shamanism, although shamanism is not a religion. It's a perspective—a way of seeing all things as sacred. Shamanism does not preclude any religion. It simply says that anyone can have a direct experience of the divine without an intermediary. By honoring the sacred essence of everyone and everything, one's

whole life can truly become a spiritual adventure.

Omens and signs

The shaman relates to every form of life as being alive, filled with energy and always communicating something to us. The key is in learning how to receive the communication. "Omens are a way Spirit communicates with us in the physical world," states shaman Ken Eagle Feather in *Traveling with Power*. "You can decipher omens from virtually anything, but pay special attention to unusual occurrences, whether it's the strange behavior of birds, or conversations in which someone says something that catches your attention in a special way, or when a book falls off a shelf in front of you. You might find that messages on billboards change right in front of you, so that while others are reading an ordinary advertisement, you end up reading a message from Spirit. Be careful about being too strict in your interpretations, though. Remember, you are looking for guidance, not assurance. An omen might be the same for several people, or it might mean several different things. It's up to you to create your personal omen dictionary. This open-ended response is called nonpatterning, and it provides the space for Spirit to communicate with you."

Using personal experience as the means through which wisdom is gleaned (rather than through reading, thinking or analyzing), the shaman presents opportunities where people begin to sense a real, interactive connection with everything else that exists, even those things believed to be inanimate such as rocks, plastic, glass or metal.

Everything is energy

The basis of shamanistic creation, healing and transformation has always been the knowledge that the essential nature of everything is energy. Modern science, specifically quantum physics has only recently concluded that every living thing is made of energy. The reason that walls and rocks appear solid is because they vibrate at a low, dense rate. We know that pictures travel invisibly through the air and arrive on our TV screens. Is it such a stretch to open to the possibility that everything has an invisible energy within it? And that communication can be transmitted through this energy?

Shamans utilize the knowledge that everything is energy to create in their world by using their conscious attention to direct the flow of energy within all forms of life. Energy flows where attention goes. Indeed, scientists are now reporting that the outcome of their experiments are significantly affected by

the beliefs and thoughts of the person conducting the experiment.

Since we come to this planet to evolve our soul within the paradox of this world of polarity (light and dark, inside and outside, body and spirit), we must develop the skill to play consciously and creatively with duality. If we are truly perceptive, we can see how the energies of each opposing polarity are serving us. If we see how we are at effect of all these dualistic energies, then we can make a choice of what to keep and what to eliminate. This is an act of magic. True magicians are those who can influence energy, whether it is inside them or in the world outside them. If we have learned how energy moves and behaves, we have opened ourselves up to our true selves. This is what the paradoxes of our world teach us. Shamans know that humans are determiners of spirit, and the choices, decisions and priorities that we set fashion the reality of the world in which we live.

Seeing

When shaman use their ability to "see" the underlying energy dynamics of situations and relationships, they are able to "see" cause and effect connections and forces that are not visible when viewing the circumstances superficially, i.e., looking only at the outer form. Perceiving the energy dynamics of life events reveals new alternatives and possibilities not previously apparent.

The Practical Power of the Shaman

"The art of the (shaman) is to be able to guide, to be able to illuminate the path in such a way that the person hooks on to a greater experience—that of freedom..." Eagle Feather shares. This allows people the freedom to move beyond limits of past perceptions into the realm of options, fresh creativity and natural magic.

A shaman would "see," for example, that the anger of a supermarket clerk resulted from the clerk's inability to express their feelings. The shaman could "see" how these emotions were adversely affecting not only the clerk, but the people in line. Consequently, a shaman may choose to engage the angry clerk in a friendly, relaxing conversation in order to shift the situation into flow and harmony.

Power

We have many powers within us that we can learn to use for our own benefit and for the benefit of others. From the shamanistic point of view, all power comes from within. Power comes from authorship (authority). Shamans become the authors of the

creations in their world by freeing themselves of programmed and conditioned perceptions. In moving beyond customs, manners, rules and techniques, the shaman embraces the practicality of "What works, works." The shaman has little concern for how something works, only that it produces the results that one intends. Shamans are the most flexible, utilitarian and efficient authors of their world. They take the shortest, quickest route to their goals, even if the path tramples on their own concepts or beliefs.

One way people can experience this power is to look for proof in their own lives. Take love, for example. One way to increase the presence and power of love in a person's life is to decrease the presence and power of judgment. Shamans notice that their attention cannot be in both places at the same time, and, therefore choose where they want to spend their energy. To spend energy judging that they harmed someone or that another person caused them harm, would be a misdirection and waste of energy for a shaman.

Eagle Feather explains more about the true nature of power, "Anyone looking for power over others or control over material processes is probably going to be disappointed by the teaching,

which essentially define power as the ability to free oneself from one's own perceptions and habitual patterns. The message seems to be that once you align with the energy, you're no longer the master. Spirit is."

Healing

A shaman is a bridge between this world and the invisible world of the spirit. A shaman is very anchored, very present in this world. Being so centered and grounded, a shaman can assist a person to travel into dimensions and see things from a much bigger perspective. Then people can heal because there is more room for them to expand and open to fresh new realities. This expanded awareness from the shaman creates a strong foundation for people to awaken to their own healing power within. The goal of the shaman is always to support the awakening of the soul. The shaman acts as an anchor so the person can reach their own depth and move through their own cellular transformation.

Shaman Frederick Wolf concurs. "People really know how to heal themselves. It's an illusion to think that someone is going to come and heal them. But what will happen is, when they feel the support and safety that the shaman can hold for them, they will have faith enough to go into that place inside of them that knows how to heal. It's not some magical thing that happens. It's very natural."

Way of Living

Shamanism is a way of living on the altar of Mother Earth. It's a way to live in balance on the earth, a way of finding not only peace with yourself personally, but peace with nature and your environment. Shamanism is bringing the two worlds together: your inner world—"your heart"—with your outer world. It's important to be balanced, to be grounded in both worlds. We should be able to go anywhere and be at home, whether it's in a cave or a big city.

Shamanism is a pathway that can help us to realize the sacredness and magic within and all around us. Birds that soar into the heavens, trees whose roots reach deep into the earth, everything in nature reflects an aspect of our souls. As the poet Rumi said, "You will see stars and moons mirrored in your being." Shamanism is letting go of our limited ideas and concepts of who we are. As we abandon our illusions of

separateness, we open to the beauty and simplicity of our true nature—our connectedness with all of life.

Drawing from the wisdom of native and ancient spiritual traditions, Keith Varnum shares his 30 years of practical success as an author, personal coach, acupuncturist, filmmaker, radio host, restaurateur, vision quest guide and international seminar leader (The Dream Workshops). Keith helps people get the love, money and health they want with his FREE "Prosperity Ezine" at www.TheDream.com.

Out Of This World – Shamanism Healing

By Eric Cho

Many of the ancient cultures of the world adhered to one or the other form of Shamanism. This is a tribal healing tradition where a Shaman is said to transcend the boundaries of the conscious world and travel to a world unbeknown to the ordinary man. Here, the Shaman converses with spirits and come back with secrets that allows him to heal others, foretell the future, control the weather and even ward off attacks.

The word `Saman' is defined as a technique of ecstasy. A Shaman is a practitioner who is able to enter an altered state of consciousness where he can communicate with the supernatural. He acts as an intermediary between the world of man and the world of Gods and often has the power to descend to the realm of the dead. He leaves his body when he is in trance. This trance is induced by chanting, beating of the drum or passionate dancing. In the more unsophisticated cultures, Shamans even used to take to fasting, ingesting psychotropic drugs or even undergo torture to achieve the trance.

As seen from the practices, Shamanism is based on the principle that the world is divided into 2 distinct parts - that visible to the ordinary man, and that visible only to the man with powers. In the second part, there is a miraculous world populated by the spirits who influence the world of the living and who are always willing to help. The Shaman acts as a link between the two worlds and works for the benefit of his society. Shamans are therefore experts employed by animistic societies.

Healing is the most important function of the Shaman followed by prophecy. Shamanism, in the larger sense of the word, is thus perhaps the oldest form of healing. It is a form of religious medicine that originated more than 25,000 years ago. The healing practices of most of the ancient cultures stem from a shamanic tradition.

The Shaman is often credited with magical healing powers and is crowned as the religious or spiritual head of a tribe. He is called upon to treat the sick and to drive away demons. It is important to remember that in most ancient cultures, sickness was considered to be the result of demoniac forces acting on the individual. The difference between the ordinary man and the Shaman is that while the man is possessed by spirits, the Shaman controls the spirits.

All this may lead one to believe that Shamanism is an occult practice that is buried in the past and that it has no significance to the modern man. But Shamanism is still practiced all over the world, although it has evolved into different forms. Native Americans are said to perform Soul Flights to heal. In Tibet,

the Shamans use a drum to help them in soul retrieval. In Kerala, Shamans are closely tied to the temple and use amulets and music to contact the spirits of the nether world. Shamans in Africa often use hallucinogenic plants to induce trance.

Shamanism has found a place in modern day healing because of the importance it places on the soul, mind and spirit. Shamanic healing includes relief from pain, anxiety, stress and emotional healing. It is believed that there is an inner Shaman in everyone - a force that can be released if one is able to concentrate hard enough. Unleashing the power of this inner Shaman will help cure maladies that afflict us.



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