

SHAMANS ALL-AROUND

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Back in the 1960s, when I came of age, there were all kinds of spiritual trips and tripping. And these spiritual trips and practices only got worse in the 1970s, because it seems that's when they all got monetized and became businesses. And today they are everywhere and mostly it's all about business.

I am pretty tolerant of spiritual and religious freedom, as long as your particular freedom does not include preying upon and converting others. I draw the line at proselytizing, and long ago became tired of those who delighted in informing me that I had not been saved and all of that. How would they know and "saved" for what?

My favorite story is when my young niece, who knew I was a "Buddhist" (whatever she thought that was) would tell me things like "Uncle Michael, I am sorry I won't be seeing you in Heaven." Right, probably not, whatever she meant by heaven.

When the religious groups would come knocking at my door, I would sometimes invite them in, provided that they give me equal time. That was a quick cure, because they were not into listening. They had long ago lost their receivers and had become only transmitters. Sometimes they would come back with their main honcho, who they imagined could certainly set me straight. No luck. They too could or would not listen to anything other than their own voice, and when I said a few words to them, they would leave quickly, never to return. You get the idea.

And, for me, at ROUthe tip of the top of this pyramid of spiritual babble are the would-be shamans. A shaman never "would-be" a shaman. It is not an avocation, not a trade, and not something one can simply choose to be. Above all, shamanism is not a group endeavor. The idea of a shaman convention is an oxymoron, plain and simple.

Shamanism is not a group practice, not something you can go to school to learn, and not something than can be inherited. In my understanding, it is the singular most isolating spiritual state that I am aware of.

And while shamanism does involve a direct head-on relation with Mother Nature (and the laws of that nature), shamanism has nothing to do with the trappings of any particular culture, including totems, sacred animals, and all of that, although that is fine too.

And shamans don't just exist in Mexico, the far southwest, or in eastern Mongolia. Shamanism is an organic activity that arises spontaneously in every country and society, and in groups large or small.

And lastly, a shaman would never think to call themselves a shaman, except to attract money, and shamanism is not about money. It is way more insular and isolating than that.

The shaman is the master of ecstatic experience, of life outside of the body, and here that includes the body of conventional society as well as the body we all eventually will be leaving one day. The shaman is an initiator in out-of-the-body experience only because he or she has themselves been initiated and knows when others are going through the same experience they

have.

[The above is an excerpt from one of the forthcoming “Spirit Grooves” videos, which I continue to work on. This is what I am doing these days, FYI. The photo, which I did not take, sums up what would-be shamans like to imagine they are. True shamans, some of which I have met, are just ordinary people who can respond to spiritual needs in others in an extraordinary way.]