

Mikkal Smith Interview, YouTube 5-9-12
2012 Shaman Festival at the Blue Hippo.
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(transcribed by Jeff Nixa, Crows Nest Michigan)

“This weekend I talked a lot about the future self in various contexts and workshops, as parts of awakening the shaman within. The fascination with the phenomena of shamanism and the shaman is enormous right now, and it’s growing in modern civilization, that is, Western civilization, which includes South Africa. The white man in particular has this enormous projection on indigenous shamans. That’s a wonderful thing in a way...because you can go and study (if you can find someone to teach you) and learn some things. But if you go deep enough in your study you will realize you don’t need to go there. You have all the resources for the shamanic life within you.

So what we’re really doing is projecting a higher self or more complete self on the phenomenon of shamanism. It’s very shamanic to know this, actually.

Developing this shaman within is like a zen Buddhist practitioner sitting daily in meditation, trying to “chop wood carry water” and live in the moment to manifest his Buddha nature. It’s already awake. It’s already there. (But) all this potentiality for spontaneous creativity compassionate living needs to be accessed and downloaded and lived.

That’s the challenge. That’s what a yoga is for, a spiritual path and set of practices is for. How to go in there and find that greater self that you are and then download it. And live it, and practice it. The easy part is really to find it. The harder part is to download it.

My theme in all my teaching and workshops is to help people discover their shamanic powers within: their capacity to relate to the earth, the cosmos, their ancestry, their own history. You don’t have to go to another culture, race and borrow theirs. Jung asked, what is it about Western man that thinks there is no great value that can come out of his own psyche, that he needs to go import it? Eastern religions and so forth.

It’s a good thing in a way because the rise in this image, its numinosity, its fascination, says that our greater self is waiting to be discovered and something is wanting us to discover it. From a shamanic perspective I say this is Mother Earth. She’s calling us to wake up and live from a fuller self that is more connected to her and more heart open and more earth honoring, more reverent of all forms of life. More creative, more possibility.

So the future self that I talked about is about finding that “shaman within”. It’s really your ideal self. Because you can maybe envision it, through meditation, shamanic

journey or ayahuasca experience, you can get a sense of that self which you can be but you are not yet. But to know that you have this future self and that you can go there and *get* it and start bringing it into the now- this is the message of the Andes. Of the shamans traveling into the future and looking for a future with cleaner water, cleaner air, where people live in greater balance with mother nature, *pachamama*. It's the same idea: that you can journey inward and find this greater totality that you are. And begin, in really a daily practice, incarnating it, living in it. And in time, like anyone who has been practicing zen for 20 years, their life has been transformed by that. Greater grace, compassion, spontaneity, more creativity.

I think it's also important for people to experience their greater self or future self. And ecstasy, trance dance, sacred breathwork, the ayahuasca...the idea that you are too limited in your conception of yourself and you need to get a greater vision of who you are, what you are. And, a vision of what is in the way of that. And do the healing work of removing whatever wounds, habits or addictions that prevent you from manifesting that spiritual reality that you are.

I don't have a crystal ball in terms of what the planetary culture will look like a generation from now. But if we can begin manifesting this future self, this "shaman within", I can tell you we will begin living more creatively, more heart open instead of from a different place that is very mental and fear-based. And we're going to have more ecological sensitivity, more sensitivity to other cultures and races. As we become a more planetary culture we're going to encounter each other more intimately. We're going to have to learn to live and appreciate each other.

Along the way, there are forces of resistance: people with political, economic power, they're not going to want to give up their way because it is serving them very well. So they will resist, and there are fear-based sources in humanity tied to religion and poverty and they may make war. They may fight this I think.

But I think within a generation we can become less war-prone. Wise up a bit. And see the great cost of war. And find another way. Better conflict resolution. Better communication skills.

I've written two books that have become classics in America. *Psychotherapy and the Sacred*, and *Jung and Shamanism in Practice*. At the time I was writing them 20 years ago, people had to ask me, what is shamanism? Now the *Jung and Shamanism* book, the royalties are 800 times what they were in the first 5 years. So it's just now coming into its own. It was published in 1996, it's now in its 15th year. It's really taking off. So something is happening in the collective consciousness. Plus the number of people coming to my events and workshops is growing. On FaceBook, I formed a few community pages and almost overnight I had ten thousand people interested. So, the world is hungry for it.

(Interviewer question: How do you define the *zeitgeist*?)

“Zeitgeist: “the spirit of the age; is one of angst too...people are afraid of change, but they know its coming. For good or ill things are going to change. We could go from a condition where we are living fairly well now to one where we are just struggling to survive. Or we could go to one where we live pretty damn well and create perhaps less greedily.

I'm very encouraged by these type of (shamanic) events. I've talked to a great many people here about their experiences. What I heard were a lot of people healing, a lot of people connecting with themselves for the first time. A lot of people getting a new vision for their lives. A new sense of where they're going to head. People at a crossroads with more clarity about how to proceed now about where they're going. People who haven't really stepped outside of their box and expressed any of their larger self are suddenly doing it in the dancing activities. I believe we planted a seed here and in the hearts of people that came and helped. I feel that seed is already taking root and there will be an event next year and the thing will grow.

I do these sort of things because of where we're at in our point in history. I feel we are truly at a crossroads and we need some rapid change, and we can't wait for revolution, for biological evolution.

We need different humans. A more evolved humanity. That means spiritual practices. That means a spirituality that is also ecological. And honoring of other cultures and other life forms besides the human.

So that's why I'm doing this work.