

Overview of shamanism



A Shaman is a person viewed as being able to influence good and evil spirits in the world. A Shaman is the storyteller, religious healer, and usually the elder. Shamanism is a belief spirits exist, and they play important roles in personal lives and in the group or tribe. The shaman is believed to connect with the spirit world. Spirits can be good or evil and they can treat sickness caused by bad spirits. The belief associated with Shamanism dates back at least 10, 000 years, but there is evidence to support that it has existed for 20, 000 years or more, and that the word shaman originated from a Siberian tribe known as the Tungus. A Shaman is believed to heal the sick, to communicate with spirits, and guard and protect the tribe spiritually. The shaman uses sacred words, objects and rituals to protect men from evil spirits, his role is that of rival to the bad spirits and a guardian to the ordinary man. Shaman are as healers, prophets and spiritualist. Usually the Shaman had the role of the head warrior which made him the most powerful man of the tribe. How the shaman practiced his role and powers included the knowledge of atrance stateto go on vision quests and motivate tribe members, use symbolic garments and sacred objects such as the calumet, or pipe. In these ceremonies and rituals, they used symbolic magic, dances, and chants with the use of rattles and drums and would use fasting and cleansing rituals.

The belief in spirits and the ability of the Shaman to communicate with spirits was important to Shamanism. The greatest belief is that every object in nature is controlled by its own individual spirit, or soul. Some spirits are good and help mankind, but other spirits are bad and likely to wreak havoc and harm on people and on tribes. It is the bad spirits that cause suffering,

sickness, death and disease. If a Shaman gains control over the spirits he becomes very powerful. The healing role of the Shaman was important. Many Native American Tribes believe that if a man becomes ill that a bad spirit has taken over his soul or has possessed him. Then the Shaman would try to gain power over these spirits. A Shaman would use chants and use objects that would remove bad spirits and protect their owners. The Shaman is also called the medicine men, they used dance, drum playing, and use rattles to enter the spirit world. They wore ceremonial clothes and carry sacred objects to incarnate the spirits of nature and strengthen their power. The medicine man of some tribes also used masks that were believed to hold spiritual powers and would identify them with the spirits in other worlds and initiate their powers.

I found so many interesting things about Shamanism and researched it because I have American Indian in my blood line, so I was just curious. It's not a belief you see much in modern times except on reservations or in other countries such as Asia, Siberia and Russia. There is a lot of misguided people and understanding of the beliefs and people used to consider them witches. The trance dances and use of plants to reach states of hallucinations and psychedelic states of mind were foreign and the thought of someone speaking to spirits and healing in this state could not be justified for some religions. It was not "normal", so it could only be witchcraft or evil. I believe that every religion has beliefs and know there are good and bad forces, everyone just has to figure out what religion is believable to them and what they want to put their faith in. Every religion or belief has their own way of dealing with the bad or evil, so for other religions that have been

taught their way it is not going to be accepted because it is not their belief. I was raised in a Pentecostal church and we did things that some Christians didn't think was normal too. We were loud, danced, and you came as you were, anyone was welcome and encouraged to join if you were willing to listen the sermon and worship the lord. I can remember hunters coming in their camouflage, carrying their rifles joining us on Wednesday nights. I always thought that was a kindness and acceptance you don't see just anywhere. I was raised in a home that my father said going fishing on Sunday and being out in nature was his way of feeling closer to god. My mom didn't go to a church either, but my grandparents were strong Christians. I guess in a way I'm still trying to figure things out, but I know that being kind and generous to others is rewarded and there are always consequences for doing bad. That is something all society should learn at a young age regardless of religion. I guess in the end every religion or belief have their own rituals that seem weird or unusual if it isn't your religion, so if you are kind and respectful it shouldn't matter what you believe.

Works Cited

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