

# Reweaving The Web





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**A Shamanic Journey of Connection**

*A Book by Sparrowhawk (Jay Ray)*

*To Boadi, who kept my feet on the ground  
while my head reached for the stars.*

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Sparrowhawk (Jay Ray) asserts her moral right to be  
identified as the author of this work.

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## *Acknowledgements*

Trying to figure out whom I want to acknowledge as part of this huge project was surprisingly difficult, not because I don't recognise the contributions that have made it possible, but because there are too many to choose from. When it started, I had been asked to run a shamanic course by an ex-student. I took on the challenge for her alone, however it quickly grew to a small circle of participants once I committed to doing it. As I began the process of preparing the work we would work on together, I found that a book was inherent within the written notes, so I wrote it in that format from the outset, testing it on my students as we went along. So thanks and appreciation must go to those wonderful women, Peta Hudson, Carolyn Vincent and Rose Mackinnon who also has the dubious honour of being the one whose phone call prompted it.

Truly, though, that is far from where it all began. It was whilst in practice as a Psychosynthesist in Sydney, that I read Michael Harner's *The Way of the Shaman* and was thunderstruck by the similarity between his description of a shamanic session and the way I was working with my clients. Thus began a long journey through my own ancestral past, and the shamanic tradition, which is mine by inheritance.

I feel I must acknowledge the work of Roberto Assagioli, and his establishment of the Psychosynthesis modality, which totally changed my life and journey. I will never be able to express enough gratitude as long as I live. Kym Forestall trained me in Sydney and opened the door to that world, making it a possibility for me. My thanks must go to him also.

Peta Hudson receives a large portion of my thanks for walking the road beside me for so many years in so many different capacities. Always our association has stimulated me to great depths of self-

understanding. Her connection to “Earth as spirit-being” has been a great harbour of understanding. Not always a calm one, but always growthful.

It was a mystery to me how a book was brought into being from the masses of computer files that it had been. Determined as I was to self-publish, Philippa Jamieson took the hand that I waved around, in desperate need of an editor, guiding me along the process and finally turning me over to the capable hands of book designer Jenny Cooper who has been pulling it all together for me. What would I have done without you both?

And so the road has wound ever on, back to the beginning. I eventually arrived at the time when withdrawal from formal teaching and practice gave me the time to write, something I had been planning to do since I was about eight. There was a teacher at the Bush House Open Air School that I attended as a sickly child back in London in the 50's. I don't remember his name. He once said to me that my essays showed a possible future as a writer or journalist: a defining moment in my development. Encouraged by his faith in me, I aimed in that direction. I missed out on a journalist cadetship on leaving school, only to be offered it when I was miles from that place metaphorically as well as actually. In hindsight, I am aware that I am very lucky that I didn't go that way. The path of spirit called me down a different lane, but here I am, at last, fulfilling the promise that that dear man saw in me all those many years ago. I can never thank him enough.

Well, I think that has to do because I have a horror of sounding like I'm at the Oscars. There truly has not been one situation or one person that has crossed my path that isn't entitled to some credit for the actuality of this work.

Blessed Be!

SPARROWHAWK (JAY RAY)



## Introduction

Shamanism has become a bit of a fad since the 1980s. As we in the Western world search for something that is missing in ourselves, we have turned to the East, looking for a spiritual teaching and practice that might help us to understand ourselves more than the Christian overview that has permeated our society for over 2000 years now. There are very good reasons for this search. In the embedding of Christianity into our worldview, most of our own indigenous knowing and connection to ourselves was violently cut off. Somewhere between nine and 20 million indigenous Europeans were slaughtered in the Christian inquisition. They were mostly women, mostly those that honoured the connection to the land and their ancestors, but often were just people in the wrong place at the wrong time. Once the inquisition had gone through a village there were sometimes only three women still left alive. It's a wonder that any of European stock survived as a race at all. But we did survive: as a race severed from our indigenous roots, which we began searching for from the moment the Christian church loosened its grip on politics. From the moment, in fact, that we realised that the church

did not fulfil any earthly need, but promised only peace in death if we followed its rules.

After World War Two, there had surely been quite enough death and glory. It was becoming obvious that dying for God and Country was not all it was cracked up to be, and many people found that the commercial glow of the 50s soon wore off. Our own so-called culture offered little else but economics, so we children of post-war Europe went on our own quest for a better way. The other polarity beckoned – as it does for most adolescents. We tried everything our parents most disapproved of. So much was learned and opened up in those years. Most of what is good and bad about our current social stage commenced in those years: meditation, organics, alternative lifestyle, renewable energy and environmental conservation, animal awareness, women's rights: all were put on the agenda by this generation of change. Drugs became a big weight in the opposite direction as they turned from use as forms of 'enlightenment' to recreationally 'getting out of it'. We didn't find all of what we were looking for in the East, or in drugs. We found much that was good, but we did not find ourselves.

The 80s commenced in a flurry of hope for the future. Many old ways were opened up for scrutiny. We began looking closer to home at the indigenous people in the lands that we had overrun and settled: the Native American, Inuit, Australian Aboriginal, Maori, and Mexican Curanderos. We tried to become clones of them. We went to live with them in their places, learned their chants, borrowed their artefacts, wrote books about their ways, calling them our own. In so doing we made them extremely mad. They felt 'strip-mined' yet again by the lost people of the West. But they taught us nevertheless. Still we did not find what we were looking for, though their ways were getting closer to our truth. We learned much about them. We were on the right scent, but we did not find out who *we* were.

Somewhere in that time, we discovered Shamans of all cultures. We found that they could travel between the worlds and bring information back for their people. Then a miracle happened. We found the way back; our own people also had a culture somewhat along the same lines as the peoples we had been pestering for knowledge. We found that, quietly beavering away hidden in our own culture, were people who held threads of our own ways hidden deep in the esoterica of Christianity, though having nothing to do with Christianity itself. We discovered the Western Mystical Traditions, and our journey meandered back to whence it began, 'knowing itself for the first time'. Through the revitalising work of Gerald Gardener, we experienced huge growth in the followers of Wicca, a neo-pagan group styled on the early God/Goddess worship of Europeans. The New Age Travellers attempted to restore the lifestyle of the hunter-gatherers of Britain. All things Celtic came into favour. Thanks to the commitment of the Irish and Welsh, we still have something to search through, albeit sketchy and christianised, demonised and derided. But it's there.

And we had Shamans too. We had Druids and Witches, Priestesses of Avalon, Merlins and Pendragons. At last we had found something that had sat in our own consciousness awaiting renewal. We had begun the deeper journey into recalling and reclaiming ourselves. And out of this environment the New Celtic Shaman was born. Often a she (women have less investment in retaining the current Western model of culture, for it has never served them well), but sometimes a he, they heard the call of the Ancestors. One by one they honoured that call and began learning from whence they came. They began journeying the Web of Life to find what we had lost, and restore it to the people so that they could stand beside our other indigenous brothers and sisters, connecting in peace and understanding. Wicca is currently the fastest growing worldwide spiritual movement

among Western women. As a result, much of the old understanding of Earth as Womb and connection to all life has been put back on the agenda in our lives. The balance between the sexes is being addressed on a deeper level than equal pay for equal work. Males, as well as females, are questioning their commitment to the further destruction of the planet for the purpose of more commodities, and making more money to buy more commodities. Middle class Europeans largely created the problem and until we find out who we really are and our own connection to Mother Earth, we cannot initiate the solution to that problem. For it *is* ours to solve. We have a responsibility to the other peoples of this world to clean our mess out from their backyards, as well as from our own. But it has begun. There is a long way to go, but it has begun.

So, what is a Shaman? A Shaman is someone who is able to travel the Web of Life. Someone who journeys into the land of the Ancestors to reconnect to them, and learns at their feet what we have lost. They meet with the representative of the Animal and Plant Worlds to bring peace between us. And they are people who continue to plumb the depths of their own psyche, clearing out the infections of the current dysfunctional view of life, in order to be up to the job. They are people who know nothing, but are willing to find out and be taught, not only by this world, but also by the worlds of the alternative realities that live all around us. Their job is to serve the land and the people, and in so doing are served. Their primary function is to connect up that which has been disconnected, and that's just about everything. Until enough reconnection to ourselves is achieved, we have no hope of connecting, en masse, to the rest of the planet. That's a big job. Much is needed. Shamans are what can help that happen. But they are just people: people that are like you and me but are open to finding that which was lost. Are you such a one?