

Shamanism, Sejd and the Indoeuropean Way

Part I (IV)

The Fellowship of Kvasir is a Northern think-tank. By our lectures we try to make people understand, in a more profound way, the idea of the Indo-European way. In our case we come from the North, so much of our lectures deals with the full understanding of the North way. However, in this lecture, I will speak of a perspective which is strictly Indo-European, and which has to do with a comparison to Shamanism.

From scientists who have been working with, trying to understand Shamanism in a scientific perspective, I will try to make a short summary of this concept on the whole. Then I would like to talk a little bit of my own experience.

I will talk about the roots and spreading of Shamanism throughout the world as we know it, and then get into my personal experience.

Ethnologists have, since the beginning of the 20th century, gotten into the habit of using the terms shaman and medicine man, magician and sorcerer in different contexts. The aim is to describe actions of different persons who are found in many so-called "primitive cultures", and who work with magical powers incorporated in religious traditions.

This has led to the use, more and more, of a developed terminology to study the history of religion, even among "civilized peoples". Discussions have occurred suggesting the existence of, for example, an Indian, an Iranian, a Chinese, a Germanic, and even a Babylonian shamanism. One refers to the primitive elements that are witnessed in that religion in that particular region. However, the name Shamanism and its use is now generally considered a purely Arctic concept, especially for peoples of Mongolian descent.

In the course of development, the word shaman has been used in several contexts. Using that word in the cases where we usually use sorcerer, magician or medicine man, however, leaves the result vague. It also gets complex. If we are looking to describe the notions of people who work with "primitive magic

or mysticism", whose designations also are vaguely defined, it does not seem to add any better understanding than using the words magician and sorcerer.

The shaman can sometimes be said to be a psychopomp, i.e. a messenger for the gods, someone who brings dead souls on to the next dimension. He is also considered to be a mystic, poet and a priest, but above all he is a medicine man and magician who is expected to be able to cure and perform miracles.

In the strict sense is, Shamanism is a religious phenomenon in the region of Central Asia and Siberia. The word can be derived from the Tungusic Saman through the Russian. The corresponding terms in other languages of central and North Asia, and Siberia, are: Yakut *Oyuna*, Mongolian Bygy and Udaga. Yakut *Udoyan* means "shamanka".

It is important to understand that shamanism and the whole concept of it originates from central and northern Asia; it doesn't matter where it ends up. Throughout this area, the magical and religious life of the community has a focus on the shaman. In South America, several Indian tribes have adopted and become deeply rooted in shamanism; on this, read Michael Harner.

This certainly does not mean that the shaman is the sole performer of sacred rites or stands for the entire religious context. There are tribes where a priest with the task of presiding over sacrificial ceremonies collaborates with a shaman. It is also the case that each family head is responsible for performing ceremonies in the clan and family. The dominant religious practitioner is, after all, the shaman. Throughout northern and central Asia, the ecstatic experience stands for the central religious experience. Here the shaman is alone on the throne.

Shamanism can be said to be the same as "ecstasy technique". It is what we can call a definition of this phenomenon that is highly complex.

To begin with, we must make a distinction. When we discover shamanism in an area, it does not necessarily mean that people completely focus their magical and religious life around shamanism. Generally speaking, shamanism exists together with several forms of religion and magic. The earliest travellers in the various countries of Central and Northern Asia described and documented it as "ecstasy technique". After a while, there were discoveries of a religious and magical practice in Oceania, North America and Indonesia. There were strong connections, and it became essential to explore this alongside Siberian shamanism.

Magicians and magic exist all over the world. Shamanism, however, points to a specific magical practice such as Magical flight, Mastery over fire and the like. Here we can see advantages in using the term shamanism in its specific meaning. We can directly understand the shaman as a specific expression of shamanism explicitly, not to be compared with any medicine man or magician in various other primitive societies.

The special thing about the shaman is that his soul makes journeys to the underworld or to heaven. He is a healer but he has a method for this that is all his own. As for being a healer, every medicine man is, but they do not, by definition, use ecstatic techniques that are shamanistic according to religious ethnology and religious history. The shaman can be said to be a sorcerer, but not all sorcerers can be said to be shamans.

As regards the relation of the shaman to spirits, we must find a similarly specific definition. A nature spirit or a soul from the dead, as well as an animal from mythology can constitute a spirit. There are people in all ages, in the modern world as well as in primitive societies, who claim to maintain communication with spirits. It can be about control or being obsessed. To look at the various possibilities of how spirits could have contact with humans and what problems this would entail would constitute an immense study.

The shaman is not by definition "an instrument of a spirit". He communicates with nature spirits, demons and the dead, but does not become possessed, but controls the spirits. This defines his relationship with the helping spirits. One can note this in comparison to a possessed person. It happens in exceptional cases that the shaman turns out to be possessed, but special explanations for this are at hand.

If we want to gain a comprehensive understanding of shamanism and its inherent religious and ecstatic appearance, the observations above are a platform for further understanding. The pervasive exposure of this complex phenomenon clearly emanates from North and Central Asia with roots far back in history and there have also emerged clear influences. The typical shaman comes from here.

Some things are unique to Central Asian and Siberian shamanism. It applies to expressions such as ecstatic capacities that allow magical flight, mastery over fire, etc., descents into the underworld, special relationships with spirits and ascensions to heaven. These approaches are composed and integrated into

defined techniques and ideologically. They maintain a structure, regardless of where in the world they appear.

In terms of the stratification of shamanism and the ecstatic ability in the form of ritual and religious ideology, the shaman has an overwhelming influence. This is because they have access to a part of "the sacred" that cannot be accessed by ordinary citizens. In this sense, they are to be considered "chosen".

However, the elements of shamanic ecstasy did not emerge from the traditions and manifestations of ecstasies. This has existed much earlier in the form of parallel religious and magical expressions in society. It applies generally to the mythology, rites and ideology of the Siberian, Arctic and Asian peoples.

One could categorize the shaman as a mystic. They have their own religious experience which is very intense and thus, does not always appear as an advantage; rather, it is classified as an exclusion. In many cases, it is the elite of several societies and religions who dispose of the shamans. They undergo a psychological process that culminates in a religious and psychological crisis. In this respect, shamanism can be attributed more to mysticism rather than religion or it represents the mystic in that specific religion.

Shamanism values several specific and private religious elements. There is a core of ecstasy. However, it in no way exhausts the entire religious context of a society. The séance the shaman undergoes is ecstatic. He undergoes a tremendous separation and begins a new life, which certainly contains a large portion of tragic greatness. The history of religion bears no close resemblance to shamanism as a religious experience, which stands out so much in its distortion.

How shamanic powers are inherited.

In Northeast and Central Asia, the following two methods are at use:

- 1 The shamanistic "profession" is inherited.
- 2 You are "called" spontaneously as an individual, or you are chosen by society.

Among the Altaians there are examples of how one can become a shaman based on one's own choice. Among the Tungus it has happened that one is chosen by one's clan.

However, these types of shamans are not seen as powerful as those who were called by gods or spirits, or those who inherited their title.

As for whether one has been chosen by one's clan, it matters whether one has had a powerful ecstatic experience or not. In cases where the youth has not had that experience, it is out of the question that this youth can take the place of a dead shaman.

Two types of teaching are required to be recognized as a true shaman. The first takes place through, for example, dream sessions. The second contains traditional techniques that are shamanistic and contain the names of various spirits and their functions. Clan mythology and possibly secret languages as well as genealogy are important elements. The ancient shamans who are considered masters give this training together with the spirits. The two parts of the education form together a form of initiation.

There is documented content regarding dreams that shamans have had. In the history of religion, similarities and structures that are well known can be demonstrated. It is not hallucinations of anarchic structure or individual personal dilemmas that are presented, but rather consistent, theoretical concepts that are traditional in its nature, with a content that is redundant.

There is a problem about whether shamans fall into the concept of psychopathy. In their training, would-be shamans are expected to undergo an ecstatic and didactic initiation that can cause one to become neurotic.

Acquiring shamanic powers means that you must be imbued with an understanding of a technique and its underlying theory. This can only happen through initiation. Thus, the important thing is not that you inherited it or received it through voluntary application or from the spirits in a transfer. The initiation is crucial. Eventually, this might lead to full acceptance as a shaman by one's specific society.

It is the structure of the universe that makes it possible for the shaman to communicate between the cosmic zones. According to the shaman's structure of the universe, there are three levels; heaven, earth and the underworld. All these levels are thought to be connected through a central axis. The technique used by the shaman involves traveling from one cosmic region to another. Then you have to know the mystery of how it is possible to break through from one plane/level to another.

There are many contradictions in the complex symbolism used in the intercommunication between the levels, the three cosmic zones. Much of the

modern cosmological symbolism has been discovered which has invaded and corrupted the original concept over time.

The secret is that there are openings, holes. There are openings where the axis passes between the three cosmic regions. Through these holes, gods can penetrate down to the earth and the humans, but also to the underground regions and the dead. Through these openings, the soul of the shaman can also travel in ecstasy; he travels to heaven and the divine, or to the underworld.

The experience of a "sacred space" seems to have been important in history. This space was not in our world, but figuratively in heaven, the world of the gods. Something from this "sacred space" manifested itself to humans and eventually led to the perception of a kind of holiness that could be embraced through a breakthrough between the cosmic planes.

I would now like to change the focus of the talk quite substantially. It is the case that the reason we are meeting here is based on a rather substantial personal decision. At some point, we have all taken the position that the spiritual, immaterial or purely philosophical in life is of decisive importance for our perception of meaning in life and in the present.

- My personal experience of the difference between the Indoeuropean way of thinking and shamanism.

I myself was 25 years old. I had involuntarily and voluntarily had many experiences in the spiritual or esoteric direction. I remember accidentally getting access to Michael Harner's book: "The Way of the Shaman", and being both startled and curious. Shamanism. Hmm...

I became so curious and taken by his book that I decided to attend a lecture/workshop with him in Stockholm, where I lived at the time.

After the lecture, we were about 100 enthusiastic listeners who then lay down on the floor and after some instructions went into a trance and began a spiritual journey, at that point to the underworld.

The drum helps really to get into a trance. For my part, it was impossible not to fall into a trance condition. The drum keeps on and it is really appealing to many of your senses. This is a shamanic drum which shows the perspective of the understanding of the world, different aspects and a symbol of the axis.

I had already been doing this myself for a few months and thought it worked well. During the workshop I felt an enthusiasm for this and decided to start a drum group.

- The power animal in Shamanism

It is an incredible feeling to connect with your power animal during a shamanic journey. You feel meaning and direction. You can focus the power in a particular direction if you want, for example to heal someone. Several times I also managed to demonstrate physical results in really difficult things, people recovered, things worked out.

- Actions during the shaman's journey

What is it that you do when you perform actions and use powers during a shamanic journey?

As I have come to understand it, after a few years of reflection, it is a way of influencing the power contained in the World tree. Apparently, due to talent, experience and willpower, I have usurped the opportunity to influence wild power in a specific direction. Today I would call it manipulation. Even if it is for a good purpose, I have to accept that it is manipulation.

The upside down tree holds significant meaning in various spiritual and cultural traditions. Its origins can be traced back to ancient civilizations such as the Celts, who believed that trees were sacred and had the power to connect the heavens and the earth. The upside down tree symbolizes the inverted world, a mirror image of our reality, and represents a profound spiritual transformation.

- In Norse mythology, there are 2 names for the World Tree; Yggdrasil and Läräd. Yggdrasil roughly means "Tool of the Terrible". It comes from the two words Yggr - "The terrifying one" and Drazil - Tool.
- Läräd simply means "The healing tree".
- From this I want to state that shaman journeys will always be journeys in Yggdrasil. There are images of Yggdrasil where the roots are in the sky and the crown is downward into the earth. The whole concept of the world tree Yggdrasil is twisted.

- Lärad is the name of the World Tree which starts from an Indo-European perspective. Here you actually have the same feeling of magic and grandeur, but there is a healing stillness. The whole experience of Lärad, esoterically, is that you don't travel the same way, fly around, and take advantage of OPPORTUNITIES. You do not act in the same way; it is rather a quest where you challenge your level of understanding and hereby seeing things differently, developed into consequences.
- It is about SEEING opportunities, and furthermore, considering carefully, taking responsibility and then SEEING with your whole self, physically and mentally how things might turn out.
 - If I want to benefit my clan or an individual, is there an option?

I got in touch with the Indo-European idea and concept, which is about a more multifaceted view of existence, the divine from the Indo-European perspective and the context here in Mannheim/Midgård. It is very much about how society can/should be built based on how we as individuals can develop. How good could the social structure be if we humans *want* to develop, not only individually, but also in an understanding of how this development takes place, both on the individual level to how we develop society together?

- What then is the Indoeuropean thought, the Indoeuropean concept?
- The Indoeuropean concept is based throughout on responsibility; it applies to your initiative in thought right through to the outcome of your actions. It is the good of the clan that is the focus and not your individual perspective. Egoism and egocentricity are not seen as inherently good.
- Spiritually speaking, there is a pervading that you are responsible for your actions, regardless of your intentions. The result counts. In this way, over time, this also affects the overall consequences in your future reincarnations.

The ancient concept of Tomten/Nissen before Santa Clause.

In a comparative reflection, I would like to refer to a Norwegian article from 1997 in the magazine "Maal og Minne" by Ottar Grönvik. He explains the concept of "Nissen", which in the Nordics can also go by the name "Tomten". In Swedish, the word "tomten" is, interestingly enough, both the word for the ancient Tomten/Nissen, but with a different emphasis on the first syllable of the word instead of the last, the meaning becomes "my plot/my ground".

It is about the concept Nissen, which can be derived from the Old Norse word NiDsi, which means "the dear old relative". The crucial points of the article are that since sometime in ancient times and in mythology, on these grounds, humans have married elves. So we are related. Since the function of the elves is to take care of nature, from a kind of divine perspective, we also become responsible for this land.

It is not a matter of an ancestor cult in any sense at all; rather, it is a "many thousands of years -experience" of a relationship with nature and rituals surrounding life and death; the understanding of how "the whole" will catch up with us, regardless of our interaction on different levels with nature. This, of course, also goes for how much we "use/exploit" nature for our own sake. We are responsible.

Reflection and comparison between "Power animal" versus "Fylgja"

- "Power animal" - learn to control/use the wild power
- "Fylgja" - learn to tame the power within you, as being a part of nature - then the fylgja might appear.

We are part of nature - this is a foundation that separates us from believers of Monotheism.

I am very happy and grateful that Kvasir has been invited to you here at Ostara; in order to exchange ideas and opinions, thoughts and experiences. I feel that here we are in a fundamental agreement; we are aware of the fact that we all are a part of nature. Nature was not created for us to exploit or eradicate in the name of Monotheism as is now about to happen in our time.

Entering Läräd.

When I enter Läräd, it is with a fundamental attitude that I am first and foremost trying to experience impressions in a total way, with my whole being.

In doing that, I can begin to see context, possible conflicts and start processing my impressions. Then the perspective becomes different. I suddenly see opportunities, conflicts and shortcomings and have to immediately stop and reflect on this.

However, during a shamanic journey, it had instead proceeded with an immediate intuitive action of some kind. In my opinion, it works that way according to how the conditions in the shamanic spectrum are set up.

On the other hand again, in Läräd I consider the environment based on a unified, balanced set of energies.

The interesting thing here is that many times I find myself able to make parallel connections to quantum physics; there, it is said that if you look at something, you are immediately part of the process that involves what you are looking at.

The experience in Läräd ends with a kind of harmony even if the spiritual impression was more chaotic at first.

Something about “the Fylgja”

There is a difference in the experience of the fylgja in an Indo-European context, compared to the power animal in shamanic journeys.

In my experience, you must incorporate your feelings and a holistic understanding of your reactions connected with your own history (a large concept of its own), together with other beings, relatives, cultural contexts, animals and nature. It's not exactly easy, but when you work at it, something eventually happens. It turns out, it could be, that the fylgja appears in front of you. It all feels big in another way, and quite different compared to the meeting with a power animal. There is a sense of responsibility that comes with it. I can't really act spontaneously, but need to have a way to take responsibility for what I experience, based on my totality as a human being. It certainly doesn't become spontaneous; it feels softer and larger, I don't feel initiated to directly carry out actions. On the contrary, I must have with me what we humans have developed over time, namely reflection. Herein lies the responsibility.

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