



Lessons in Unconditional Love from Peru's Shamans

by Mike and Tajinder Hammer

In most cases, these specialists serve only as healers and advisers, handling no other duties in society. It is remarkable that in a society of generalists who all pitch in to handle whatever comes their way, Peruvians most revere their shamans as uniquely qualified professionals.

Christianity Plays a Role

We were surprised to learn that Christianity plays an important role in modern shamanism which refers to a range of beliefs and practices related to interactions between humans and the spiritual world. In fact, it is such an array that it may be a disservice to refer to all of these healers by the same name.

At the simplest level, Peruvian shamans are go-betweens or messengers that span this world and another. In many Peruvian traditions, shamans are more than communicators or intermediaries, however. They treat bodily illnesses by rebalancing the soul's seeming failures. Cleansing a weighed-down or damaged soul is seen to restore an ailing body to its intended wholeness.

In a shaman's medicine bundle it is not unusual to find a crucifix tucked away alongside healing stones. Some of these healers fully embrace aspects of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Christian faiths, as well as, other seemingly unrelated religious traditions. In fact, we've noticed these anciently rooted practitioners use many of the same healing techniques as those presented in *Healing Touch*, helping us see that all of us and our beliefs really are one.

Unconditional Love

As we said, it is difficult to generalize about shamans because each of them has been influenced by many tribes, events and outsiders. We can tell you a little about those of Inca descent, however. Incan shamans follow the principle of *Munay*, which translates best as unconditional love. For generations, this tradition has been part of their daily lives. Can we claim the same

It is difficult to generalize about what modern shamans of Peru believe because there are so many amazingly diverse religious, spiritual and cultural influences at play today. However, when we think of shamans -- we think of unconditional love.

Shamanism, we have learned, is alive and well in Peru. In fact, this tradition of love and healing flourishes because of the country's respect for their elders, their history and their traditions.

Through our travels in Peru, we have learned that shamans are not just quaint relics of another time. They are relevant, interesting and inspiring people with important lessons to teach us. We admit their methods are strange and their clothing is sometimes just as unusual, but these medicine men and women have always left a profound impression on us.

It Feels Right

No matter what you believe, it is hard to call what shamans believe wrong. We know firsthand that their healing techniques work - suggesting they are as much from God as anyone else who can facilitate healing.

On our tour group trips to Cuzco, we worked with local shamans, each one of them the most kindhearted, loving and authentic person you could ever imagine. These healers seem to radiate unconditional love from the very core of their beings.

commitment to unconditional love?

In this tradition, you have to be in right relationship to yourself, others and nature. We once chatted with a seven-year-old boy as we hiked to one of Peru's sacred sites. Before he left us, he offered us the traditional departure greeting - "*Tupanchiskama*."

It was a simple and common greeting, but it was a powerful and profound moment for us that moved us in an exceptionally deep way. The phrase means that the speaker will see you next time, whether in this life or the next.

The phrase reminded us to never say goodbye, only farewell. It also reminded us how privileged we were to be in the presence of people who truly believe in the reality of a life beyond this one. The greeting is just one way we have seen Munay expressed as heartfelt unconditional love for the spirit inside, as well as, the person in front of you.

Munay is not romantic love at all. It is a deep, spiritual love that flows very naturally from the heart. It is a love that expects nothing in return, accepts whatever it finds and is an intrinsic part of every being.

In the United States, it is easy to let technology, busyness and stress distract and preoccupy us. We have the privilege of traveling to Peru, however, and experiencing Munay. It is something everyone should do at least once in their lives. In exchange for your visit, you will see and feel an example of unconditional love that is likely not to be found anywhere else.

Experiencing Shamans in Cuzco

Peru's modern shamans are easy to find in the San Pedro Market in Cuzco. Elsewhere in Peru, shamans offer their services in markets and at sacred sites, presenting their heritage and offering healing to locals and tourists alike. Look for a *curandero* or *curandera*, which literally translates from Spanish as healer.

An experience with a modern shaman could include anything from prayers with sacred stones and objects to the use of gentle herbal preparations, if you are willing. We do not learn much about fashion from shamans, but we do learn a lot about love from them.

Every experience is unique, and each one is also a chance to immerse yourself deeply in the varied and amazingly rich culture and spirituality of Peru, one of the most amazingly meaningful and loving places on the planet.

About the authors:



Mike and Tajinder Hammer are passionate about the teachings of Peru's medicine people and lead regular tours to Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley. Join them for an extraordinary trip to Machu Picchu and beyond. www.bestmachupicchutrips.com