



This Month's

# Special Feature

## **`Aina, Through the Eyes of a Spiritual Warrior**

**from Lynn Andrews**

*`Aina* is the Hawaiian word for the magical world where the sacred souls of the people meet the majesty of nature, and to the Hawaiians, the natural world is sacred.

Throughout the world of shamanism, from Hawai'i to Siberia, from Manitoba to South America, Africa and Australia, wherever in the physical world it is practiced and in whatever form, the natural world is sacred. To me, shamanism is a powerful and beautiful world view, born of the interconnectedness of all living things in the universe, both seen and unseen. What an exquisite way to know sacredness, that we are all part of the great One and that part of that One flows through each of us and through everything that is, plant and animal alike, the winds, the seas, the rains, the world of spirit world and the world of the physical, even other universes, connecting all that is in one great dance we call life.

The word "shaman" is actually Tungusic in origin, from the indigenous Tungusic peoples of Siberia who conceive of the universe as a living organism: *šamán*, "one who knows," one who is able to divine the hidden and use the powers of the spirit world to heal.

Although they are called differently and work in somewhat different fashion across the world, the *šamán* - those who know and enter the spirit world at will, who go into the great mystery of the unseen to bring back the power and magic of healing wisdom to the physical world - have been a vital part of the fabric of humanity in every corner of this earth for tens of thousands of years, continuing to the present day. Because it is practiced so differently in different cultures, however, there is no singular expression either for the *šamán* or for the practice of the shaman; modern English has come up with the term "shamanism" to embrace this world, without offense to any of the many magnificent differences in the way that the sacred medicine of spirit is understood and practiced around the globe.

My teachers, the forty-four women of the Sisterhood of the Shields, come from indigenous shaman traditions on four different continents and twice as many countries, although they do not follow the traditional ways of their societies. They are the inheritors and guardians of a shamanism based on the principles of the sacred feminine that is over ten thousand years old, rooted in the knowledge that earth is a female planet and Mother Earth is the womb for all that lives upon her, that to live successfully on Earth we must understand and embrace the power of the sacred feminine equally and in balance with that of the masculine, and that to find that balance we must understand and

work with the natural forces of the entire universe, which are both male and female.

Ours is the shamanism of the sacred warrior, the spiritual warrior who knows that Mother Earth gives us life force, the life blood of our sacred body, and that the plants and animals, the four-leggeds, fish and winged ones, give us nourishment and healing both in the physical realm and in the realm of spirit as we ride the windhorse of sacred intent into a world of harmony and light. As spiritual warriors, we do commerce in the world with the integrity of our own life and spirit. Our weapons are the shields of awareness, personal integrity, the symbols of ancient truth and the sacred giveaway. The spiritual warrior chooses the target carefully, with one foot rooted firmly in the world of the physical and the other always in the world of spirit; takes aim; pulls back the bow and shoots the arrow with the total commitment of the warrior's spiritual and physical being. To the spiritual warrior, you heal by looking for the patterns of dis-ease that need to be changed.

Hawaiian spirituality is also thousands of years old, tracing back to the ancient peoples who looked to *makani*, the wind that is the life-giving spirit, to assist them in crossing the thousands of miles of ocean that surrounded them and to nurture their spirit and strengthen their well-being. Ha is the wind that is the Breath of God, which forms the spiritual and physical life of the peoples of the Pacific. In the teachings of the Sisterhood of the Shields, the wind is also sacred, for it is the breath of the Great Spirit.

Much of Hawaiian spirituality centers on the practice of *moi'olelo*, or the power of the spoken word, and the Hawaiian language is rich in its descriptions of nature in all its many forms. There are close to one hundred different words for rain, from gentle showers to driving hurricanes, each one evoking the spirit of its rain within the body and voice of the speaker.

Hawaiian spirituality is built upon a reverence for their ancestors, who they believe control the elements of nature, whose spirits walk amongst them, embodied in the form of a tree, a beautiful flower, a rock. Hawaiians see, touch, hear, sense and feel God through natural forces, and their sense of personal well-being and spiritual wholeness is intricately intertwined with their relationship to the natural universe. Like the shaman world everywhere, Hawaiians see themselves as the caretakers of this magnificent earth, and many Hawaiian *kahunas* are experts at healing with plants.

To the Hawaiians, balance and harmony are a guiding spiritual principle. They believe that if you change the way you look at something, what you are looking at changes, that proper actions, thoughts and words maintain balance. They also believe that out of the mating of the great sky father and earth mother comes everything in our cosmos. That is why we are all related, why there is consciousness and communication among all things, and this constant interaction between all life forces is the basis for wellness.

The spirit of *aloha* runs throughout the Hawaiian world and world view: *alo*, "in the presence of," and *hâ*, "the divine breath, the breath of life and creation." The guiding principle of *aloha*, "in the presence of the divine breath of life," is the spirit and presence of oneness and the love that is the breath of the soul. To the Sisterhood of the Shields, this is the divine balance of body and spirit, where you must have a good relationship with the Great Spirit to know love. This is the true power of the spiritual

warrior, the power of love.

In the spirit of *aloha*, I wish you *mahalo*, "May you be in the divine breath."

*Lynn Andrews is the New York Times and internationally best-selling author of the **Medicine Woman** series of books, 19 books and workbooks chronicling her adventures and studies with the Sisterhood of the Shields, of whom she is now a full member. In between her continuing work with her teachers and her students, she is now working on her 20th book. You can learn more about Lynn at [www.lynnandrews.com](http://www.lynnandrews.com).*