

AYAHUASCA



AYAHUASCA is a decoction used by many Indian groups in the western Amazon. It is known by several generic names like **Yagé, Caapi, Natem** and of course **Ayahuasca** or **Madre**. It is under this last name that it is most known in Peru and in the Andes. Ayahuasca as Yagé or Caapi names both the drink and the liana that goes into the composition of this drink. The term Ayahuasca is of Quechua language and means "liana of the dead". (Aya: corpse, dead, deceased Huaska: general term for naming lianas.)

To prepare the decoction, to this liana are added the leaves of a shrub known in Peru and Brazil under the generic name of **Chacrana**.



IMPORTANCE OF THE DIET BEFORE A CEREMONY

Diet is a primordial element before a ceremony of Ayahuasca.

In Peru, the Shipibo Indian diet is very strict, but allows a stronger connection with the Madre. It may be less restrictive on a diet in other countries of the Amazon, but all agree on the absolute prohibition of **alcohol, drugs, sexual activities (including masturbation), drugs, meat pork, red meat, too much salt, spices and chocolate.**

Diet is not always easy for occidental people. However, it is strongly recommended to have a diet **at least 7 days, and if possible 10 days before a ceremony.** 15 days is even better. The closer we get to the ceremony, the more the diet must be respected with rigor.

Ayahuasca is traditionally used as a powerful purification tool during ceremonies. This purification is manifested by a "purge" in the form of vomiting, but also diarrhea (rarer and usually at the end of ceremony). We purge emotional energies (fears, anxieties, frustrations, resentments), residues of pharmaceuticals or anesthesia, alcohol or drug abuse, excess food, stored in the body for years and whose effects we suffer negative.

Ayahuasca is a master plant, called Madre or Grandmother. For Shamans it is a sacred spirit that must be respected. The diet is part of the respect given to it by absorbing the spirit of the plant in a clean body, as much as possible, outside and inside. In some cases, not respecting the diet can prevent the effects of the plant to be felt, even by repeating several times. Some people will have no effects and others will have physical or emotional feelings but no "vision". In other cases, the "purge" will take place but it will be to evacuate inappropriate foods from a diet not respected, the red meat for example, and the "work" will not be done as it should.

The more the diet is respected and rigorous, the more the "work" will be deep, powerful and effective!

In the same way it is strongly advised to prolong the diet during the week following the ceremony, or at least to make sure that the "exit" of diet is done gradually.

MODIFICATION OF NOTION OF TIME

The modification of the notion of time is a constant of the experience of Ayahuasca, with almost always the sensation of an extension of duration. In most cases, the duration of the ceremony actually seems much longer than it actually is.

ABSENCE OF LINEAR PROGRESSION

There is no linear learning process identified. No chronological order of the sessions is accompanied by a parallel progression of quality, quantity, and visions.

In other words, a subject who takes for the twentieth time Ayahuasca is not sure to see more than his neighbor who attends a ceremony for the first time. Nor is it certain to see more than at its first session.

The emotional state in which a ceremony is discussed undoubtedly affects its course, as well as the quality of the diet that has been made the previous days.

ABSENCE OF LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The current experience of Ayahuasca is not accompanied by a dissolution of consciousness but by a modification of it. The subject knows throughout the session who he is, where he is and what he has ingested.

In general, Ayahuasca amplifies brain activity and sensory perception. The subject therefore notes an acceleration of his thoughts and keenly perceives the slightest noise or faint glow, hence the need for silence and darkness. It is also important not to touch other people during a session. In the same way, the subject also experiences an amplification of his consciousness, an overcoming of the discriminative capacities of his habitual self, a widening or a transcendence of his ego.

CONSISTENCY

The vision of Ayahuasca may appear surprising, formidable, disturbing, even incomprehensible a priori, but it is never perceived as incoherent or chaotic. It does not manifest itself as informative, although successive visions may seem unrelated according to the laws of classical causality.

When returning to the ordinary state of consciousness, the experience of Ayahuasca is not integrated as a destructuring experience, totally irrational even if very often abstract or symbolic visions do not allow their immediate integration by the conscious.

COLLECTIVE CHARACTER

It is remarkable, although it is not constant, that various participants share the same feelings about the experience of the session.

VISIONS

Visions can therefore be an opportunity for exchanges and sharing, to show collective convergences, even between individuals who do not know each other at the beginning of the session.

Visions can offer different types of images:

- abstract images with shapes and colors sometimes very elaborate, see unpublished for the subject
- anthropomorphic images of characters with realistic or fantastic appearances (dwarves, giants, headless characters, monsters, angels ...)
- animated nature: any object, mineral, plant or animal located in or out of the visual field and likely to be animated mentally
- ontological visions concerning his past, his future, his affective constellation, his own universe
- phylogenetic visions about community, society, human nature
- cosmological or mystical visions
- visions of snakes that are the archetypal representation of the spirit of Madre (Ayahuasca)

The vision can be constructed, elaborate or on the contrary extremely primitive, intense and invade the subject, or only distant and superficial. Finally, it can go beyond the normal material limits and the conventional space-time framework. The vision can thus be exerted inside the body and the psyche, the only limit being constituted by the own capacity of the subject to "see".

Hallucination does not only concern the visual domain but can integrate other senses:

- auditory hallucinations (especially voice, music)
- aesthetic hallucinations: perception of touching the body for example or facies changes
- olfactory hallucinations: perception of intense, smelly or pleasant odors
- cross hallucinations: a sound can be seen as a color, an odor as a form
- "general" hallucinations: the subject experiences the sensation of "presences" beneficial or evil, atmospheres, atmospheres often indefinable character that can be described as feeling of strangeness

EFFECTIVENESS

The vision is capable of modifying the subject's daily life, his character, his mood, his behavior. And this can happen even if he has not clearly identified the meaning of his visions.

Quite undeniable, we can feel and experience sometimes very important changes in its existence. The most obvious manifestation is the frequent ability to make latent decisions for a long time in order to modify one's life (professional orientation, relationship breakdown, lifestyle change ...) related to a sometimes powerful opening of consciousness caused by the plant.

Ayahuasca is not only a plant, it is also a sacred Spirit.