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CHAPTER 1

Plant Medicine Is A Portal, Not A Shortcut

I want to clarify something when I use the phrase ‘plant medicine.’ Is plant medicine the same thing as herbs? Not really. Examples of herbs are basil, thyme, mint, parsley, horsetail, etc. But when I talk about plant medicine, I’m referring to chemistry that is much stronger. Herbs are great. They are healthy, medicinal, and generally safe. But plant medicine, especially psychedelics, contains powerful compounds and alkaloids that can trigger stronger and deeper physiological, psychological, and nervous system responses in your body. They can be useful and beneficial—if you don’t overdo it—because some people may need that level of intensity to burst through their habitual patterns of unconsciousness.

Now, if I were to compare plant medicine to pharmaceutical drugs, then honestly, there’s no comparison in terms of which is healthier. Plant medicine, being natural and unsynthesized, retains nature’s protective spirit. It hasn’t been corrupted or altered, unlike synthesized drugs that often come with a laundry list of side effects. The spirit and intelligence of nature’s medicine stays intact, so you’re less likely to face negative side effects compared to something synthesized. Look at the difference between the coca leaf that some of the indigenous people in the Andes chew (to give them energy to walk up these high mountains); and then look at ‘cocaine,’ which is what the coca leaf will turn into after you pour gasoline on it and alter its chemistry and degrade its natural intelligence and consciousness.

Psychedelic plants are strong, and if you use them, they can have a profound impact on your entire system. Thankfully, there’s a growing acceptance of psychedelics as a mental health tool. Of course, it’s best to use them in a natural setting with a shaman rather than in a sterile hospital room with a therapist who probably doesn’t have firsthand experience with the plant that you’re using. Still, even in that setting, it’s better than relying solely on pharmaceutical drugs.

CHAPTER 3

When The Vine Speaks: Lessons From Ayahuasca

Within ten minutes of arriving in Iquitos, Peru—the jumping-off point to the Amazon—I met a Canadian man who I immediately resonated with. The next thing I knew, he was inviting me to see an Ayahuasca lady shaman the following day. Of course, I agreed, and so off I went to experience Ayahuasca (Aya) for the first time.

Ayahuasca is a psychedelic brew made out of *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine (also called Ayahuasca) alone or in combination with other various plants of that nature. Then it is usually mixed with a DMT source such as chacruna (*Psychotria viridis* leaves) or *Mimosa hostilis* root bark. It's the MAOI alkaloids in the caapi vine that stimulate and help rebalance the nervous system. The DMT chemistry of the brew is a psychedelic compound of the tryptamine family. When ingested, DMT is said to be able to cross the human blood-brain barrier (so does frankincense and sandalwood oil), allowing it to act as a powerful hallucinogenic medicine that dramatically affects human consciousness. Depending on your current health, your motives, and what is in your heart at the time that you ingest the medicine, it will determine the quality of healing and the potency of the effect it has on your being.

The first time I did Aya I felt very calm. My nerves felt stronger and grounded. My cervical tension had also diminished. It acted like a painkiller on some level. I saw quickly that this medicine (as with mushrooms and all of the psychedelic medicine for that matter) works best if one already has a relaxed state of mind and a clean diet. The main purpose of this kind of plant medicine is to reveal to our consciousness its natural state of being. It helps do this due to its natural affinity with our internal chemistry. On a rudimentary level our chemistry must be similar to that of these plants. The difference is that these plants haven't become unbalanced and out of whack like us. So by the power of resonance they can help to reformat and restore our natural blueprint of healthful balance when we ingest them.

CHAPTER 9

Bad Trips: When The Subconscious Turns Inside Out

Why do some people have *bad trips* when they use psychedelic plants while others experience a deep awakening of their higher nature?

I likely would have had one if I had tried any kind of psychedelic plant medicine in my teens or early twenties. Thankfully, I trusted my intuition to hold off, knowing my mind and emotions were pretty unstable at the time. This is often the root cause of a bad trip. If your psyche and emotional stability are unbalanced, your thoughts are extremely negative and chaotic, and you feel like a helpless victim to your mind. This can set the stage for a rough experience.

Our emotions are often rooted in our thoughts. Think about it—you have a thought like, “I can’t find a girlfriend,” and if that thought loops, it can start to feel depressing. Or if you’re stuck on a health issue, like “I have to fix this particular ailment to feel good,” that fixation can make your ailments more acute and also make you feel terrible emotionally. That’s how people end up feeling down for years or even decades, often without knowing that acceptance is the real key to rising above the emotional and spiritual debilitation that comes from nonacceptance of what is.

When you take plant medicine or psychedelics, these effects are amplified. Normally, a thought is just a thought, perhaps with a small mental image associated with it, and it may stir a mild emotion. But under the influence of plant medicine, thoughts can become much more vivid, even morphing into visions depending on the dose. This is how people end up in trouble. Stories like these are all over the internet, and more so with mushrooms than ayahuasca or San Pedro, which I find generally safer.