

# Thruanas Musings

## One Tribe

February 13th, 2009

Mark and I have just returned from India, where we were part of the International Gathering of Elders. It was quite an amazing experience for many reasons, not the least of which is that it gave me a lot to ponder about the nature of heritage, culture and tradition.

In America, we are a country comprised of people whose ancestry is varied and diverse. Few of us can trace the family tree back more than a few generations and, overall, we have little connection to the countries from which our great, great grandparents originated. While we know ourselves to be, for example, of Italian, English and Dutch heritage, (or whatever combination is appropriate for each individual), these are just words that describe where our ancestors traveled from when they came here. We know very little about these cultures or their respective traditions. Let's face it - we're mutts! Most of our spiritual traditions are revivalist in nature and have little to do with where we actually came from.

In meeting people from all over the world, one of the things that Mark and I found interesting was the common thread that our traditions had been interrupted. Whether by war, displacement or persecution, nearly everyone could identify a break in their cultural lineage. Even our Native American friends spoke of the loss of heritage that happened when they were under siege. It seems nearly everyone who attended is still struggling to recover "the old ways." Some had gone to great lengths to research old folk tales, tattered books and still-standing villages to find a clue about how things used to be.

As I listened, it occurred to me that we might all be suffering from a need to "over-glorify" our ancestors in an effort to have solid roots. Yes, they left us a legacy. Yes, we benefit from the good they did. And (this is a very BIG "AND") - we are also left with their mistakes. It is our ancestors who "claimed territory", created hierarchies, marginalized one another, and drew invisible lines on a planet that had none, in order to define the differences between one "country" and another.

I am keenly aware that this "Gathering of Elders" was one in which many of the attendees were struggling to feel "legitimate." In a time where unity is a common theme amongst spiritual people, we spent a lot of our time in India making comparisons rather than experiencing the "One Tribe" conclave I had hoped for.

I loved the people I met from around the world and truly look forward to crossing paths with them in the future. This is not really about the people - it's about authenticity. When we create a sacred circle, where do we place the elements? Do we place them where they actually are in our surrounding area

# Ahriana's Musings

or where we have been taught they should be? Do our symbols come from the world we share, or from history books and pictures of sacred sites? Who are the “ancestors” we call on?

What our ancestors did well is this: They listened to the Earth. She was the original teacher that ALL of our ancestors learned from. The word indigenous was used a lot at this gathering to identify who came from where. We are ALL indigenous, aren't we? Didn't we all come from Earth? Is there someone out there who is not from here? (If so, speak up now because we have lots of questions!)

The Earth taught our ancestors. The Universe was the classroom in which the ‘traditions’ were born. She will teach us in the same way, if we just listen. She has always been the teacher and she holds the lessons that are appropriate for this time.

We can find our roots in our ability to be authentic. When we honor each other and all life, live into who we know we truly are, we will root ourselves in the original intention of the Earth Mother. We are One Tribe – and, in the words of one of my favorite TV shows “There can be only One!”

*Ahriana Platten*