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## WINE OF SOULS: HOW THE USE OF AYAHUASCA CAN IMPACT ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF NEUROPSYCHOLOGY

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**Abstract:** Currently the indigenous drink Ayahuasca has getting a lot of followers in the streets, they find the solution of their problems when drank it, the tea, also knowing like wine of the souls, it has hallucinogenic properties and combined with advanced religious rituals for history, surrounded by mysteries. So many people say the beverage is magic and this article explains how the Ayahuasca acts on the body and if it really helps in the lifestyle of the consumers.

**Keywords:** Ayahuasca. Neuropsychology. Quality of life. Reichian Therapy.

When the term ayahuasca is mentioned, many doubts arise almost instantly in those who hear it, although its use is ancient, very little is known about the substance and its implications in everyday life. The topic still needs study and the little existing production still cannot clarify the nuances and secrets of the drink. Furthermore, the subject needs to become relevant in the area of health, since during the ritual with ayahuasca several physiological phenomena occur, such as diarrhea, intense sweating, which over time can transform into implications for the health of the person. person who uses it, so it is necessary to leave aside the mysticism and talk about the concomitant aspects of the drink.

To achieve a satisfactory and reliable result, the aim of this research was to seek real and measurable data, acquired through people who were in contact with the drink and, in a quantitative way, indicate whether the use of the drink is beneficial. Another point discussed here is how ayahuasca acts on the human organism and its connections with both Reichian theory and Neuropsychology.

Ayahuasca is the nomenclature used to name a tea with a hallucinogenic effect, produced by indigenous culture using two Amazonian plants as raw material, Jagube, also known as Cipó de Mariri (Banisteriopsis

Caapi), and the leaves of the Chacrona bush (*Psychotria Viridis*) (GOMES, 2016). The practice of consecrating the indigenous drink dates back to the pre-colonial Amazon, its use is carried out by several indigenous tribes without a specific date for its beginning. Today it gains media relevance, appearing in large urban centers, both in Brazil and around the globe, as a natural and alternative therapy, these spotlights made ayahuasca the focus of this study (CARVALHO, 2020. GOMES, 2016)

For Carvalho (2020), the use of ayahuasca is present in today's society, however the lack of research carried out on the subject cannot elucidate whether it has therapeutic potential. It is also worth remembering that the drink's use is regulated by Brazilian legislation, being understood as a cultural and religious manifestation, and cannot be prohibited (Brazil, 1988). The author highlights the prejudices and lack of respect for indigenous culture, including the media, which sometimes disseminates it in a satirized way.

## WHAT IS AYAHUASCA?

Ayahuasca tea is an ancient knowledge, used by South American natives, mainly in the portion related to the Amazon rainforest, its use is very common among shamanic tribes, a philosophical concept for a lifestyle that seeks self-knowledge and contact with nature. There is evidence that tea was used by different people for similar purposes throughout history and is still used today as a natural form of medicine (FERNANDES, 2018)

At the beginning of the 30th century, Raimundo Irineu Serra, or as he would become known, Mestre Irineu, went to work in the Amazon rainforest and came into contact with the drink. From this encounter, the rubber tapper founded the first ayahuasque religious line, Santo Daime. History tells us

that the name was obtained from a vision that Mestre Irineu had during the consecration of ayahuasca, some emphasize that it is also an affirmation of what the adepts ask for when using it as “give me light” (GOULART, 2004)

Master Irineu, as he became known, spread the Daimé culture throughout Brazil, he performed rituals at his residence, for small groups, where he looked to indigenous tradition for a way to carry them out. Little by little, music appeared that accompanied the consecration, and a well-defined ritualistic approach. They were part of the first ayahuasque religion, in addition to master Irineu, who was called Padrinho because he was the one who brought the teaching, the uniforms who were assistants, inspectors, wearing special white clothing, to help others during the ritual (GOULART, 2004).

Over time, several branches of the original concepts were created, shaped in different ways, each of the ayahuasqueira religious strands has concepts that they share with each other, and some bases are based on Christianity, Kardecism and religions of African origin, along with concepts that each godparent (responsible for conducting the ceremony) ends up establishing in their line, always seeking healing and spiritual enlightenment (CARVALHO, 2020)

The substance has become popular in recent years and has gained ground internationally, including groups that use the drink in different ritualistic formats, even though it still has a foundation in indigenous culture. Fernandes (2018), calls these groups, and includes groups called neoshamanists and urban shamanists, who according to the author seek classic concepts in their rituals, respect the history and tradition of ayahuasca, but also rely on a modernization of sacred rites, for him, these modalities do not adapt or transport indigenous rituals to the city, but create something from scratch, using classic

concepts aligned with modernity.

## **THE PHYSIOLOGY OF AYAHUASCA**

Ayahuasca causes the hallucinations reported by users through the release of the substance Dimethyltryptamine (DMT), a powerful hallucinogen, in the central nervous system. DMT is present in *Psychotria viridis*, popularly known as Chacrona, however its action is inhibited by the action of the intestinal and hepatic Monoamine oxidase (MAO) enzyme, existing in our body (COSTA, FIGUEIREDO AND CAZENAVE, 2005)

Combined with the action of Chacrona, the Mariri vine, scientifically named *Banisteriopsis Caapi*, has in its composition the alkaloid b-carboline, which acts to inhibit the intestinal deamination of Dimethyltryptamine, thus allowing DMT to be absorbed and reach the neuroreceptors cerebral, another contribution of the vine is the increase in dopamine, serotonin, norepinephrine and epinephrine, creating a sedative effect that enhances the effects of DMT, in addition to also having hallucinogenic properties. (COSTA, FIGUEIREDO AND CAZENAVE, 2005). The study of Neuropsychology is considered an area of study that has understood the cognitive and emotional functions of the use of substances that act on the central nervous system and that can bring benefits to the body and the cognitive/mind.

## **ON THE BASIS OF NEUROPSYCHOLOGY**

The term Neuropsychology is recent, and has been gradually gaining notoriety due to its niche of study, for Mader-Joaquin (2010), a good clinical professional has the ability to understand and understand the nuances and complexities of our brain system. The author also states that along with technological advances, health sciences have also evolved,

and today it is possible to have greater precision in exams that can produce more palpable answers to how the central nervous system works in exams that can produce more palpable answers to how the functioning of the brain. Much of the work in Neuropsychology is based on neuropsychological assessments, which are devices for testing cognitive abilities and functions, as well as analyzing an individual's behavior. The evaluation battery sought to point out, both quantitatively and qualitatively, various aspects of the person, encompassing aspects of attention, perception, memory, language and reasoning (MADER-JOAQUIM, 2010).

For Luria (1981), the human brain is a highly complex organ and full of pluralities that make its study very rich and important for understanding human behavior, so work on understanding it must seek to always be updated, without rigidifying ideals, thus, leaving it open for new ways of looking at it and discovering it to emerge. Using the basis of Neuropsychology, it is possible to note that during the ayahuasca ritual, brain work changes and the individual enters a state that is related to full attention.

## **FULL ATTENTION**

Taking into consideration, the reports present in the works of Carvalho (2020) and Gomes (2016), of the experiences carried out with ayahuasca, a pattern can be observed where all the focus of the participants is directed to ritualistics, this process has variable duration times, however, it can be characterized as a period in which the individual is in a state of full attention.

Malero (2020) presents us with a definition of mindfulness based on the literature of Erik Dane (2011), where the author describes and defines mindfulness as a state of absolute focus, where all the individual's concentration energy is directed towards the task at hand. be carried

out, ignoring external and internal factors that are not related to the present moment, creating a state in which the only interest becomes the moment, it is not something characteristic and does not necessarily require meditative preparation, thus remaining within the reach of many people.

The author continues to highlight that the mindfulness technique began to be incorporated into several mental health treatment programs, being related to existing techniques, helping to reduce stress, anxiety, depression and even in cases of eating disorders, also providing increases in the area of memory and creativity (2020).

Malero (2020), still citing Erik Dane, highlights that the way attention is directed significantly affects cognitive performance, improving mental flexibility, alertness and the ability to resist distractions and errors. This way, the practice of mindfulness allows you to observe events in an impartial and objective way, improving strategic decision-making, the detection of possible risks and the perception of key resources available. Furthermore, mindfulness facilitates the effective regulation of thoughts, emotions and physiological reactions, contributing to greater emotional balance and general well-being.

Objectively, the work carried out during the ayahuasca ritual serves as a moment in which the individual becomes in a state of full attention and works on emotions that are present in their personality, but cannot be accessed during the ritual. the individual is able to change their perception of the events in their life, managing to work with them in a different way.

Starting from the ideal that the work carried out during the period of mindfulness provides results to the individual after the ritual, and that it arises from the change in the individual's perception of themselves, a questionnaire was designed to collect data on

people's quality of life after the use of tea.

The questionnaire was constructed based on the characterization of quality of life according to the Ministry of Health, which states that quality of life involves aspects of "spiritual, physical, mental, psychological and emotional well-being, in addition to social relationships, such as family and friends" and validated by the Ugv Ethics and Bioethics Center (NEB), with protocol number 2023/073. The research was organized with exclusion criteria that filtered participants, so all responses came from individuals who used the drink at least 3 times, with intervals of less than three months between each use, of legal age and who consumed the drink during a ritual religious, without being under the influence of any other drugs. Next, the data collected will be further detailed and discussed, linked to the central theories discussed in this research: Neuropsychology and Reichian Body Psychology.

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The survey received 35 responses, of which 8 did not meet the research inclusion requirements, mainly in relation to the frequency of use, where they stated that they used ayahuasca at intervals of more than three months, thus not obtaining the necessary constancy to validate their results. answers. The data collected from the other responses will be analyzed here.

From the inclusion criteria, the average age of the interviewees is 36 years old, with the youngest individual being 18 years old and the oldest being 60 years old, 18.5% of them claim to have used the drink between 3 and 9 times, while the 81 The remaining 5% used it more than ten times. The frequency of tea use was also asked, where 74.1% said they use it monthly, while 11.1% use it weekly and the remaining 14.8% use it at intervals of less than 3 months.

All participants stated that they used the drink during a religious ritual, as well as, without being under the influence of any other psychoactive hallucinogenic substance (Ex. LSD), narcotic (Ex. alcoholic beverages) or medication, which could interfere with the performance of ayahuasca.

Thus, the research was carried out online using the Forms tool, between May 24th and May 27th, obtaining 35 responses, of which 27 met the inclusive criteria and were taken into consideration for the discussion of this work.

## **POST USE EVALUATION**

The questions were divided into blocks, the first block refers to physical health, and comprises 3 questions, 55.6% of participants stated that they started practicing physical exercises after using the drink, in relation to the second question, "started walking to places you wouldn't go walking before, trying to do more physical activities during your daily life?" "The results were similar compared to the first question, with 66.7% of the answers being affirmative, however in this block the data that draws the most attention is in relation to healthy habits, as 100% of the participants stated that they started to give priority to foods healthier.

The second block is related to mental health, comprising two questions, in the first, all participants stated that they began to spend more time practicing activities and hobbies that they enjoy, all of them also stated that they dedicate themselves to spend more quality time with your family and close friends.

The third block is in relation to mental health in daily tasks and interactions, here there are also three questions, the first refers to the work environment, where all participants stated that they sought to improve their interpersonal relationships with their colleagues, 96.3% of them also state that they have increased their productivity, carrying out

tasks that they would previously put off until later, the same 96.3% of those interviewed also responded that they feel less stressed about situations that previously left them feeling upset.

The last block has two questions related to faith, in the first, all participants responded that they sought to get closer to their faith, in the second, 81.5 of the answers stated that they began to frequent religious places, such as churches and temples. A question was also asked about the use of medicines, it was asked whether after using ayahuasca, on medical advice, the individual stopped using any medicine, where 51.9% answered yes, while 37% said that the question did not apply. applied to them, the others (11.1%) responded that it did not. With this data collection it is possible to clearly observe that the impacts of ayahuasca are positive, all questions had satisfactory answers, including some having all positive answers, through this data it is possible to assess that the use of the drink created a positive effect in the daily lives of people with varying profiles of age, gender and beliefs, helping them in different areas of their lives.

Obtaining support from the data, the central question of this article can begin to find resolution, the pharmacological questions involving its physiological effects do not have space to be discussed here, since the data cannot present information relating to more complex issues of the human organism due to This is not the objective in the research, however, when talking about Body Psychology there is a close relationship that can be created, opening a new path for working with ayahuasca.

## **FINALLY: THE BODY AND MIND CONNECTION IN REICHIAN THEORY**

From the perspective of Reichian theory, the main focus of intervention is with regard to the development of body awareness, that is, the understanding that the body is a fundamental element of the emotional psychological experience of the being. Reich argued that the body acts as a storehouse of traumas, emotions and experiences that the individual experiences throughout life, and that it is necessary to work on the body to release the emotions that are repressed. (QUADROS, 2017)

In turn, the ancient ayahuasca has been associated with several therapeutic effects, including expansion and access to altered states of perception and consciousness, as reported by Gomes (2016) when citing experiences of individuals who underwent treatments with daime. The drink has a reputation for providing altered states of perception and consciousness, which can help individuals access repressed emotions and traumas, allowing them to work with these emotional and psychological contents.

This way, it is possible to establish a relationship between Reich's theory and the practice associated with ayahuasca, associating the fact that both seek to work with the body as a way of accessing and releasing repressed emotions, so this study sought to show that after experiences with sacred medicine the individual is able to work better with their own purposes, seeking to improve their quality of life, finding in this self-care a way to improve their health and consequently their mental health.

When thinking about possibilities, it is still too early to use the therapeutic term for the wine of souls, however, body theory is aligned with proposals from shamanic philosophy, work with the body that can be

found in a therapy room or in a dance circle, the unlocking of breastplates, which can be combined with ritualistic work in full attention. However, in any case, there is still no way to point out a completely safe use of ayahuasca, more studies are required in different areas so

that the discussion is strengthened and gains support, but the potential that the drink has to become an instrument is undeniable. with therapeutic purposes, even more so if added to the knowledge of Body Psychology.

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