

stripped? The answer, for Strand, is simple: “a concern for basic human values—core life values such as peace, happiness, and security; good friends, good food, and good water.”

SGI, however, still displays signs of being a religion. It grew out of Nichiren Buddhism, a branch of Buddhism in Japan that focuses on the teachings of a 13th-century monk, and emphasizes chanting the title of the Lotus Sutra to obtain happiness and enlightenment. Strand provides a history of the SGI sect from its founding by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi through its current leadership under Daisaku Ikeda, who internationalized Soka Gakkai by framing its teachings in terms of human values beyond the narrow differences that divide us. —SM

### The Shaman Within

*A Physicist's Guide to the Deeper Dimensions of Your Life, the Universe, and Everything*

By Claude Poncelet

SOUNDS TRUE

SHAMANS ARE SAID to be masters of two worlds, living simultaneously in ordinary reality and in the spirit realms. In *The Shaman Within*, Claude Poncelet places this archetype in a present-day context, outlining the characteristics of an individual who walks the mystic path while embracing modern technology, maintaining scientific skepticism, and engaging with mainstream society.

Along with providing an overview of traditional shamanic practices and precepts, *The Shaman Within* presents a variety of techniques for incorporating the shamanic state of consciousness into one's everyday work environment, family life, and relationship to technology. “Cities, buildings, cars, computers, and cell phones are all made of earth stuff,” writes Poncelet, a veteran shamanic teacher who also served as chief staff liaison on President Clinton's Council on Sustainable Development. “If we see the sacred in these things, our use of them and our lives with and among them take on a completely different character.”

As a physicist who has taught at the university level, Poncelet incorporates his knowledge of cosmology, nuclear physics, and astrophysics into his explanations of shamanic principles. Among other things, he ties Einstein's theories of relativity to ancient spiritual beliefs about the malleability of time, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle to the traditional mystical concept of the Void, and the discoveries of quantum physics to the principles of nonduality and

IN THE HEART OF NEW YORK, CHIN BEGINS TO  
FORAGE FOR EDIBLE PLANTS, DISCOVERING AN  
EARTH “RICH WITH HIDDEN WONDERS.”

interconnectedness. He offers, “Perhaps the merging of the wondrous capacity of modern science with the wisdom of the shamanic perspective will teach the human species to use its amazing toolmaking ability for the purpose of creating greater harmony and well-being for all beings on Earth.”

—DAMON ORION

### Eating Wildly

*Foraging for Life, Love, and the Perfect Meal*

By Ava Chin

SIMON & SCHUSTER

ON FIRST GLANCE, Ava Chin's *Eating Wildly* runs the risk of feeling overly busy: part memoir, part field guide, and part cookbook, it has a lot going on. But Chin has the skill to weave all these elements together into one compulsively readable narrative while teaching us something on the sly.

Chin's story takes us from her youth in New York's Chinatown, where she was raised by a hot-tempered single mother and food-loving grandparents, to her late 30s, when, following a string of romantic disappointments and family dramas, she turned to nature in search of healing. In the heart of New York, Chin begins to forage for edible plants, discovering an earth “rich with hidden wonders.” As Chin's knowledge grows, aided by a colorful cast of friends and fellow foragers, so too does her confidence and, ultimately, her sense of self and well-being.

Chin, who writes the popular “Urban Forager” column for the *New York Times*, is earnest and warm, reflecting openly on her personal growth through the years (and the roadblocks along the way). Some of the revelations may come off as a little too pat, and a few of her major life changes, like the introduction of her husband, seem abrupt. But putting your own evolution into words is no easy feat, and Chin succeeds in drawing readers into her journey while inspiring them to grow closer to Mother Earth.

—JAMIE FELDMAR

