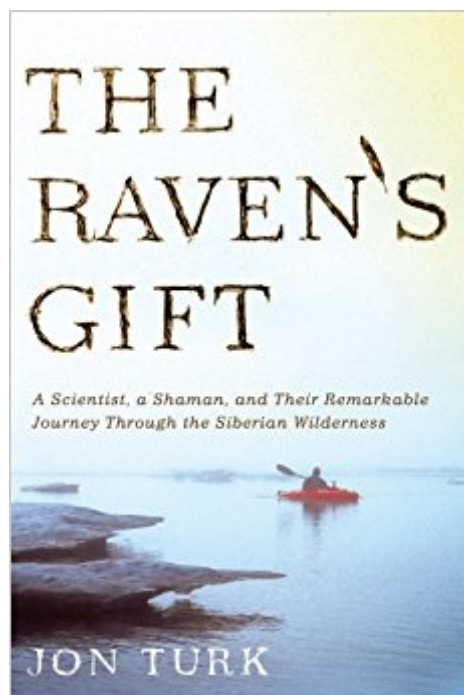




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# The Raven's Gift: A Scientist, A Shaman, And Their Remarkable Journey Through The Siberian Wilderness



## Synopsis

Jon Turk has kayaked around Cape Horn, traversed the Northwest Passage and paddled across the Pacific Rim. But, the strangest trip he ever took was the journey he made as a man of science into the realm of the spiritual. In 2000, in the remote Siberian village of Vyvenka, Jon Turk met an elderly woman named Moolynaut, a Koryak shaman, and learned about her voyages to the spirit world. A year later, Moolynaut entreated the spirit of a great, black raven to help mend his pelvis, which had been previously fractured in a mountaineering accident. When the healing was complete, Turk was able to walk without pain. Turk, a scientist, could find no rational explanation for the healing and the experience changed his life, irrevocably altering his view of the connectivity between the natural and spiritual worlds. Searching for the spirit raven, he traversed the frozen tundra where Moolynaut was born, camping with bands of reindeer herders, and recording stories of their lives and spirituality. Framed by high adventure across the vast and forbidding Siberian landscape, *The Raven's Gift* is a life-altering vision of the ties between the natural and spiritual realms, informed by one man's awakening and guided by the ancient spirit bird with wide black wings and the power to heal.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Thirty-odd years ago, adventurer and environmentalist Turk (*Cold Oceans*) watched his dog root around in newly thawed dirt and jump wildly in response to some primeval scent in the earth. In that moment, Turk had a clear vision that the margin between life and death depends on a tactile, sensory awareness of the environment that incorporates but also transcends logic. Although he

gradually forgot this lesson, it came hurtling back to him one day in July 2000 when he met Moolynaut, a Siberian shaman who introduced him to the Other World and the ways it impinges on the Real World. In prose by turns ponderous and lively, Turk narrates his journey to Siberia, the people he meets, and his introduction to the mysterious Moolynaut, who seems, like Shakespeare's Prospero, to have created a storm that washes Turk and his companion onto the shore of her village. Eventually, Turk finds himself standing naked, balancing on one foot, holding his right hand behind his back and pointing straight in front of him with his left arm as Moolynaut heals his fractured pelvis. During these moments, Kutcha, the Raven Spirit, teaches Turk to see that the Other World and the Real World are united. In what could have been an intriguing memoir but instead is mundane and uninspiring, Turk unconvincingly rehearses many of the mantras of New Age spirituality magicâ "even as he offers a breathtaking glimpse of life in a small, forgotten Siberian village. (Jan.) Copyright Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

**\*Starred Review\*** Turk, a research chemist, gave up lab work decades ago for a life of writing and arduous wilderness expeditions. Not even a near-death experience in an avalanche, which left him with a metal plate holding his pelvis together, slowed him down. By the time he embarks on an Arctic kayaking adventure in 2000, however, he is in serious pain. He and his Russian friend have no intention of visiting the village of Vyvenka on the Siberian peninsula of Kamchatka, home of the Koryak people, but a sudden storm forces them ashore, where they learn that theyâ™ve been expected by Moolynaut, a healer and shaman in her nineties. She not only frees Turk from physical pain but also guides him into the realm of the Arctic spirits. Turk writes with prowess, nerve, and precision, whether he is telling the tragic story of the suffering of the Koryak as Soviet and Russian regimes severed the ancient bond between the tribe and their reindeer or chronicling such perilous exploits as approaching Kutcha, the raven spirit, with the aid of hallucinogenic mushrooms. Balancing between âœlogic and magic,â • Turk attests to the innate powers of body, mind, and soul that are awakened when we immerse ourselves in âœWild Nature.â • --Donna Seaman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The Raven's Gift is my second armchair adventure with Jon Turk. What drew me to it was the scientist vs shaman hook, though I cheerfully admit to a fondness for any tale dealing with the far north. Thanks to my Dad, I grew up on Robert Service's ballads and Jack London's stories, and some of my fondest memories are of the aurora country just south of the Arctic Circle in Yellowknife,

Canada. But let's go back to scientist vs shaman. The best scientists have keen powers of observation. That's what gives a shaman his/her power, too. Both Jon Turk and his Siberian friends are blessed with a superior ability to see, and Dr. Jon (PhD) Turk is doubly blessed with a talent for finding the most amazing words to share his observations with us. I found the language of this book a delight. More than that, I was moved to deep thought about the powers we have gained through technological process--convenient air travel to a place like Kamchatka, chemical analyses of water, the Internet, that sort of thing--and the powers we have lost, such as the ability to taste the wind and listen to the snow, to smell the earth and sing to wolves, to understand that we human beings are in no way separate from our environment. Thinking of shaman vs scientist and weighing the truth of scientist Jon vs shaman Moolynaut--witnessing the lives of Misha, Igor, Lydia, Dmitri, Svetia, Chris, Sergei and even Anastasia's baby--I ended up more convinced than ever of the truth of the Buddhist maxim that everyone's life is equally real. The world is round. Put your finger anywhere on the globe, and it becomes the central point. Shine a light on any person living at any point, and the one truth that is absolutely clear is this: no matter what the arena, their life and death struggles are real. They matter. Deepening this understanding is Jon Turk's gift to readers of *The Raven's Gift*.

An amazing book that I will not soon forget. Turk paints a wonderful life of the people of Siberia. The detailed descriptions of their simple rough existence satiated my ever present desire to learn more about other cultures and people who live life closer to God than do the majority of us in this day and age. But he didn't stop there; woven into the story are much deeper existential themes that keep you questioning your understanding of this world, our purpose, and the hereafter.

*The Raven's Gift* is the touching story of a man who enters a little-known culture and by listening and keeping an open mind, is able to learn and grow as a human being. Central to the story is the magical healing of Turk's pelvis, but I think a bigger theme is that in our left-brained Western culture, we've lost a lot of the connection with the planet that our right-brained ancestors once had. The book made me laugh and cry, but most of all it made me think. For example, in one passage Turk discusses how a \$5 million mansion doesn't offer much more comfort than a dark, dingy hut with a fireplace that the nomadic Koryak reindeer herders sleep in. Turk is a world-class adventurer and a great storyteller. The book is nonfiction but it read like a novel and I found it hard to put down.

Jon Turk has written another wonderful book in *The Raven's Gift*! Part adventure travel, part spiritual quest, part healing journey (physical, spiritual, emotional), part anthropological study.....all

wrapped up in real friendship and love, The Raven's Gift is a delight. Through his story of travels throughout North America and the Siberian tundra, Jon educates us in the cultural ways of the remaining native Koryak, explores the physical limits of the human body, and especially challenges us to be open to new/old ways of thinking and being-----in our mind, body, and spirit.,

A friend, recently returned from Russia, said the people were unfriendly and dour. This book and "In the Wake of the Jomon" presents an entirely different picture of the Russian people of Siberia. Though they lead a life of hardship and are deprived of many of the basic comforts, they are open, friendly and welcoming to Jon Turk and his Russian friend Misha. Even if you don't believe in Shamanism, the way Turk was healed is interesting. I think this book benefits from first reading "In the Wake of the Jomon."

This is a great story of overcoming all obstacles both personal and professional. His trek across Siberia and the multiple visits to the tundra in search of the reindeer and the reindeer people and much more personal loss in his life is a story of coping with loss and keeping hope.

I originally purchased this (2 copies) for my son and son-in-law as gifts (one's a boat builder/canoeist, etc., and one's a long time ski patrol, kayaker, mountain climber, etc). I thought I'd glance through a copy to familiarize myself.... but I found it so well written and exciting, that I had trouble putting it down. I liked the intellectual level which is not always found in books of this type..... how Turk leaves what appears unbelievable open to question. As a woman (mid 70's), I also enjoyed his sensitive side and his obvious compassion. I'm just sorry that I missed the opportunity to meet the author at his book-signing event when he was in Santa Fe. (The local newspaper reviewed this book which led to my selection.)

As a chemist with a keen interest in mind body connection I was deeply interested in Turk's interactions with the people of the remote region to which he travelled, and his observations on their lives. His uncompromising honesty about his own life and decisions is a lesson to anyone.. This is quite the most unusual and best book I have read in many years.

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