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HEALING EAST & WEST

Ancient
Wisdom and
Modern
Psychology

Anees A. Sheikh and
Katharina S. Sheikh, editors

Foreword by Jeanne Achterberg

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Ancient Wisdom and
Modern Psychology

Edited by

ANEES A. SHEIKH

KATHARINA S. SHEIKH



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HEALING EAST AND WEST

Foreword to the Paperback Edition

As this century draws to a close, our nation faces the most pressing concerns in modern memory regarding health and healing. Foremost in public consciousness, of course, is the crucial question: How can health care be effectively designed and delivered in a time of conflicting financial demands? Related to this concern are questions vital to the human condition: What is the nature of the elusive healing response? Why has the development of advanced technology and improved understanding of disease only marginally improved general health over the last century? Why has the United States lost its edge in health and longevity compared with other industrialized countries? How is it that anything can cure somebody and nothing cures everybody? What part do mind and spirit play in causing, exacerbating, and curing disease? And finally, are there other systems of healing beyond the standard allopathic approaches and traditional psychotherapeutic interventions that might improve the health of the nation?

More and more health consumers from every level of society are resonating with these questions. We are frustrated by the way health care is sold. With increasing fervor, we ask to be viewed in a more holistic and humane fashion. No longer impressed by credentials, training, and technology, we demand to be active participants in the health-care system.

When this book was first published in 1989 as *Eastern and Western Approaches to Healing*, it was far ahead of its time, and certainly on the frontier of new ideas. Since the book's initial publication, the Public Health

Service released a 700-page report called *Healthy People 2000*, which challenged the nation to move beyond just saving lives. "Good health comes from reducing unnecessary suffering, illness, and disability," the report noted. "It comes from an improved quality of life. Health is thus measured by citizens' sense of well-being." The report charged the country to address these concerns as an economic imperative.

In 1992, in response to consumer and Congressional demands for more information about both ancient and innovative approaches to healing, Congress established the Office of Alternative Medicine within the National Institutes of Health. The office's immediate goal was to facilitate fair, scientific evaluation of alternative therapies and to reduce barriers that might keep promising clinical strategies from coming to light. The goal was to expand the limited view of what is considered effective and legal practice. The title "Alternative" has been challenged and decried. However, I must say that after serving on government committees where practices that were not part of the mainstream were called "unorthodox," "unproven," "unconventional," or, worse yet, "sheer quackery," "alternative" seems like progress. I predict that relatively soon these "alternative" therapies will be referred to as "integral" or "integrated."

In 1992 it was my privilege to co-chair (with Drs. Larry Dossey and Jim Gordon) the NIH's mind/body study panel, and to be responsible for writing a major section in what has come to be known informally as the *Chantilly Report*, its proper title being *Alternative Medicine: Expanding Medical Horizons. A Report to the National Institutes of Health on Alternative Medical Systems and Practices in the United States*. During the first meeting of the mind/body interest section, I was stunned by the unusual and refreshing cooperation and respect demonstrated by the group. Ideas and therapeutics far beyond the usual behavioral mind/body interventions were woven into the discussion and report with grace and ease. These included the power of prayer, the essential spiritual foundations of healing systems, so-called "energy healing," and the transpersonal nature of medicine.

A vast number of the ideas and therapeutics covered briefly in the *Chantilly Report* are described with fine scholarship in *Healing East and West*. Most gratifying to me was the evidence summarized in the *Chantilly Report* suggesting a solid research basis for imagery, biofeedback, hypnosis, and several of the other therapies reported in this book. In fact, the methodology and epistemology in the mind/body field may set a standard for the research in alternative and complementary therapies.

Two other events have occurred since the publication of the original edition of this book which testify to its innovative and important content. In 1993, David Eisenberg and his colleagues published the results

of their survey of American health consumers in the *New England Journal of Medicine*; they showed that an estimated 61 million Americans used an alternative therapy, and 22 million saw a provider of alternative therapies for a principal medical condition. The article also showed that Americans appear to make more total visits to practitioners of alternative medicine than to conventional primary-care physicians, and that they spent an estimated \$13.7 billion, of which \$10.3 billion was out of pocket. This is telling evidence that customers have chosen alternative medical treatments despite stringent government regulations, limited reimbursement, and in many cases, without evidence that the methods were supported in clinical trials. Many of the therapies listed in the Eisenberg survey, including relaxation, meditation, imagery, hypnosis, and Chinese medicine, are covered in depth in *Healing East and West*, and their theoretical underpinnings and efficacious use are clearly demonstrated.

The second development that testifies to the value of the Sheikhs' book is the launching in 1994 and 1995 of five new professional journals on alternative or complementary therapies in the United States, and at least that many abroad. *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*, a peer-reviewed journal that quickly gained a wide audience, has a theme and vision consistent with that of *Healing East and West*. Both espouse the conviction that we must actively redeem the good, the beautiful, and the true from science and the professions to which we owe allegiance. And the two share the hope that creative collaboration, integration, and bridging of language, wisdom, and technologies will bring healing professionals into their next and finest dimensions.

Jeanne Achterberg
Senior Editor

Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine
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Author of *Imagery in Healing*, *Woman as Healer*,
and co-author of *Rituals of Healing*

Foreword to the Hardcover Edition

The predominant feature in the intellectual scene as we approach the end of the 20th century is the rapid decline—even collapse—of the dualistic-materialistic paradigm that has dominated world thought for several centuries. What may be called the Cartesian-Newtonian-Marxist paradigm, based on an incurable dichotomy between matter and mind, has been shown by the astounding scientific developments that have taken place over the last four decades to be inadequate. With post-Einsteinian physics, quantum mechanics, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, C. G. Jung's inner cartography of the psyche and numerous other major developments, the whole picture of reality is changing. Matter dissolves into waves of energy, consciousness emerges not as an epiphenomenon of matter but perhaps as the primary principle behind manifestation. The new science seems to be approaching the ancient insights of seers and mystics from all the great traditions of humanity.

This conceptual revolution is having its impact in all spheres of human activity, and the quest for a holistic vision of life is beginning to assume importance in many fields. This is particularly noticeable in the areas of health and healing, because here the old dichotomy between body and mind was most strongly manifested—and most

clearly proved obsolete. Western medicine has tended to look upon the body as a sort of machine that can be treated in total isolation from the mind, but even before the major paradigm shifts, it was becoming clear that this mechanical approach was simply not working. This was especially apparent in areas where psychosomatic linkages were showing that the mind does have a major impact upon bodily functions. C. G. Jung was perhaps the first major figure in the West to grasp the deeper implications of Eastern thought for the study and practice of psychology. Subsequently, a whole host of thinkers has pursued this quest for a synthesis between Eastern and Western approaches, as has been ably summed up by Roger Walsh in the last chapter of this book.

That the mental state of the patient can vastly affect the behavior of the body, that the mind exercises a subtle sovereignty over hormonal and other bodily functions, that the power of thought can often achieve what can only be described as miraculous results, that the mind and the body form one indivisible unit, all are insights shared by all the great spiritual teachings of the past, whether Hindu or Greek, Buddhist or Arab. The ancient Indian medical system of *Āyurveda* clearly reiterates the integral link between the mind and the body, and indeed goes beyond them to try and unravel the transcendent mystery of the undying spirit within both.

This is an endlessly fascinating field, and the editors of this book—Anees and Katharina Sheikh—are to be congratulated for bringing together a number of fascinating chapters dealing with the various approaches to healing. The range of topics included is impressive, covering Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Jewish, and Christian approaches, as well as those of psychology and neurosciences. Reading these chapters is an intellectual treat because they illuminate the eternal mystery of human consciousness from many varied points of view.

To my knowledge, this book is the most comprehensive effort at bringing together the achievements of both Eastern and Western healing traditions, and thus is a very significant step toward a far-reaching integration of the best of both worlds. I feel that the book is too important to remain accessible only to readers of English, and it is my hope that it will be translated into many languages.

As we draw to the end of this terrible and unique century, which has seen more blood shed and suffering than any other in the long and tortuous history of the human race, we seem at last to glimpse a light at the end of the tunnel. The threat of a global nuclear holocaust is gradually decreasing and, although the situation remains volatile and dangerous, there is reason to believe that the human race may, after

all, succeed in surviving its own technological ingenuity. At a time like this, a new synthesis between Eastern and Western approaches to healing would be of considerable value, not only in terms of the medical aspect itself, but in the broader context of the growth of a holistic global consciousness. I believe that this book will make a significant contribution to that end.

New Delhi, India
September, 1989

Karan Singh
Indian Ambassador to the U.S.,
Former Minister of Health, India,
and author of *The Religions of India*

The history of science is rich in the examples of the fruitfulness of bringing two sets of techniques, two sets of ideas, developed in separate contexts for the pursuit of truth, in contact with each other.

from J. R. Oppenheimer, *Science and Common Understanding* (New York: Dutton, 1954.)

Acknowledgments

The work on this book began while the first editor was on an Alumni-in-Residence Fellowship at the East-West Center for Cultural and Technical Interchange in Honolulu, Hawaii. When this Center was proposed in 1959 by Lyndon Johnson, he envisioned it as an international university, a meeting place for scholars and students from the East and the West. In September 1960, the East-West Center opened its doors and since then more than 25,000 scholars and students have participated in the Center's programs.

The first editor was a grantee from Pakistan at the Center in 1961 and was delighted to return many years later as an Alumnus-in-Residence. We gratefully acknowledge the Center's support of this project, and we are thrilled at the prospect that this volume may contribute, in a small way, to the Center's mission of encouraging a dialogue between East and West. It is clear that in a world where countless problems await a solution, we cannot afford to continue to wear the blinders of pride in our own accomplishments and ignore the accumulated wisdom of the other half of the world.

We cordially thank the contributors to this book. Each one provided a unique and important segment to the project. The absence of any one of these chapters would have left a noticeable lacuna.

Our gratitude also goes out to the staff of John Wiley & Sons Publishers, and particularly to Herb Reich, who guided this project with sound advice and much patience from idea to reality.

We are deeply grateful to Marion Jablonski for her cheerful and very conscientious typing of many drafts of our chapters. We consider ourselves very fortunate to have had her help. We are also indebted to Marion Palmer and Beth Limberg for their valuable help in preparing the index.

Finally, we wish to thank our wonderful children, Nadeem, Sonia, and Imran, for bearing with us during these hectic months. Their understanding and patience made us very proud of them.

A. A. S.

K. S. S.

Introduction

ANEES A. SHEIKH AND KATHARINA S. SHEIKH

A Zen master asks his student, "Which would you rather be, a lowly stonecutter chipping away at the base of a mountain, or the mountain itself?" As he asks the question, he taps his foot on the stone floor, representing the clanging sound of the stonecutter chipping at the mountain.

"I would rather be the stonecutter for he is stronger and chips away at the mountain."

"Very good. And now there is a nobleman for whom the stonecutter works. Which would you rather be, the stonecutter or the nobleman?"

"I would rather be the nobleman for he is the boss and master of the stonecutter."

"Very good," the master replied. "Now the nobleman has many fields which are being scorched by the hot, blazing sun. Which would you rather be, the sun, or the nobleman?"

"I would rather be the sun which is more powerful than the nobleman."

"Again, very good. And now a cloud comes and blocks the rays of the sun. Which would you rather be, the cloud, or the sun?"

"I would rather be the cloud, for it is stronger than the rays of the sun."

"Now the cloud moves across the sky and runs into a large mountain which divides the cloud and makes it scatter into

many pieces. Now which would you rather be, the cloud, or the mountain?"

"The mountain, of course, because it is stronger than the cloud."

And with that, the master smiles, again taps his foot on the stone floor, and bows.

*A Japanese Folktale in
Shapiro, 1983, pp. 433–434*

Attempts to prove the supremacy of Western science over Eastern knowledge or vice versa, though not uncommon, are generally unproductive. It seems preferable to begin this book by simply acknowledging that Eastern and Western philosophies display some very fundamental differences. The dominant Western view was shaped by the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm, which represents the universe as a mechanical system that is infinitely intricate. Matter is considered to be inert and unconscious, and consciousness and creative intelligence are regarded as unimportant by-products of material development. Eastern systems, on the other hand, portray consciousness and intelligence as fundamental qualities of existence. In the Western view, only objectively observable and measurable phenomena are considered real. In contrast, Eastern disciplines generally acknowledge a complete hierarchy of realities, ranging from those which are manifest to those which ordinarily are hidden. The West's preoccupation with the concrete has fostered a world view in which man is merely a highly developed animal, and the spiritual side of human nature expressed in religion, spirituality, and mysticism is either ignored or termed pathological. Consequently, the major thrust of materialistic and mechanistic Western science has been to alleviate bodily suffering. In contrast, Eastern philosophies are essentially spiritual and portray human beings as reflections of the universe and ultimately divine; hence, their major focus has been the attainment of inner freedom: that is, passing beyond suffering to the experience of one's divinity. Toward this end, Eastern thinkers have developed a rich and challenging collection of spiritual techniques (Grof, 1984).

These philosophical differences between East and West are reflected also in the approaches to health care. Since the time of Descartes, the vast majority of Western health professionals have subscribed to dualism, and, in essence, they have regarded mind and body as separate entities. But Eastern healers have remained faithful to a

tradition which has endured for thousands of years; they believe that body, mind, and spirit form an integral whole, and that any treatment of the body cannot be separated from psychological and spiritual dimensions.

Both systems possess unique strengths, but each would benefit from fertilization by the other. The Western scientific approach has largely not accounted for man's need for inner blossoming while the Eastern quest for Nirvana has led to the neglect of pressing practical problems. As Oppenheimer (1954) pointed out: The history of science contains many examples of the fruitfulness of bringing together ideas and techniques, developed in separate contexts. The time now seems ripe for a genuine synthesis of the great achievements of the Eastern and Western healing traditions.

Perhaps due to the political and economic dominance of the West, many Eastern professionals have lost faith in their culture's approaches and have been given to wholesale and uncritical subscription to Western ideas. On the other hand, Western health scientists generally have rejected Eastern approaches without a fair trial and have regarded them "as little more than muddled and fuzzy religious systems, totally devoid of matters that a hard-nosed psychologist ought to consider" (Goleman, 1988, p. 146). Western investigators did come across some startling Eastern conclusions concerning mental processes, consciousness, and ways of promoting psychological well-being. But they tended to dismiss them as mere superstitions. They did so for several reasons. Since Western psychologists ascribed their success largely to an empirical scientific method, they doubted that their Eastern colleagues, who relied primarily on subjective and experiential means, could have much to offer. The major Eastern psychologies were rooted in spiritual systems, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taosim, and Sufism, and hence were viewed with suspicion by Western scientists. Also, many of the assumptions, aims, and practices appeared alien and even nonsensical to Western psychologists. They were bemused and bewildered by the Eastern assessment that our customary state of consciousness is permeated by distortion and illusion, that our minds have escaped our control and have reduced us to automata. Of course, the prescribed remedy for this condition, vigorous exercises in self-awareness, such as prolonged periods of concentration upon our breathing, seemed equally farfetched. Hence, it is not surprising that most Western investigators dismissed these traditions after a cursory examination and did not bother undertaking the rigorous practices which Eastern thinkers claim are a prerequisite to appreciating their discipline (Walsh, 1983). Furthermore, the two dominant models of Western psychology of the 20th century—psychoanalysis and

behaviorism—were too narrow in scope to permit appreciation of the depth and breadth of the Eastern claims.

Recently, however, interest in Eastern thought has blossomed. This does not represent an entirely new phenomenon, but rather a flowering of seeds sown long ago and nurtured through the ages by those who recognized the awesome potential of the human spirit. Western thinkers were touched by Eastern philosophies since the time of the Greeks. After all, Alexander (356–323 B.C.) and his soldiers penetrated deep into India and were not impervious to the riches of this ancient culture. One of the early philosophers profoundly influenced by the East was Plotinus (205–270 A.D.), and his ideas were echoed for centuries by the Christian mystics, among them St. Anthony, St. John of the Cross, and Meister Eckhardt.

More recently, a number of prominent thinkers and artists have contributed to nurturing Eastern thought in the West. William James, America's most prominent 19th-century psychologist was fascinated by Oriental religions. Carl Jung was an eminent spokesperson for Eastern thought among psychologists. The movement received significant support from the views of such theorists as Gordon Allport, Gordon Murphy, Abraham Maslow, Martin Buber, Eric Fromm, Medard Boss, and Alberto Assogoli. Also, Alan Watts and Joseph Campbell, although not psychologists or psychiatrists, were very effective in bringing Eastern thought to the attention of Western health professionals.

Eastern thought also found expression in Western literature. For example, the works of American writers Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman are steeped in the concepts of the East. In Europe, prominent spokesmen for Eastern thought include Romain Rolland and Hermann Hesse, a Nobel prize-winning novelist (see *Siddhartha* and *Journey to the East*).

However, the decisive factor in the growing respectability of Eastern concepts ironically has come from psychological science itself. With the loosening of the stranglehold of psychoanalysis and behaviorism in the mid-60s, research efforts extended into areas that had been taboo for a long time. For instance, investigators of altered states of consciousness have uncovered a much wider array of states than had been recognized hitherto; studies of meditation have disclosed a wide spectrum of physiological, biochemical, and psychological shifts; and due to biofeedback, voluntary control of internal states is no longer a wild hypothesis but common practice. Other challenges to the Newtonian-Cartesian model have come from investigation in the areas of mental imagery, psychedelics, thanatology, field anthropology, parapsychology, and experiential and transpersonal psychotherapies.

Furthermore, recent developments in the “hard” sciences have called into question the belief in mechanistic science. As Fritjof Capra outlines