FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ HEALTH & FITNESS

Healing from the Source: The Science and Lore of Tibetan Medicine

Yeshe Dhonden
Snow Lion Publications (May 25, 2000)
Unknown $18.95 (2281pp)
978-1-55939-148-1

In Tibetan Buddhism there is the tradition of thangka painting to depict the various forms and emanations of awakened consciousness. Thangkas function simultaneously on different levels; providing knowledge, wisdom and awakening depending on the receptivity and clarity of the viewer. Dhonden's book is likewise accessible and engaging on these multiple levels providing insights into the theory, everyday practice and enlightened sources of this healing tradition.

The content and context of the Tibetan healing arts are presented so that the reader can view at this vast topic from various vantage points, offering a wide (but necessarily cursory) sense of how the Tibetan system of healing developed, was influenced by and influenced Tibetan culture. The beginning point is the historical Buddha: "Countless eons ago, the Buddha Vaidyaraja appeared on earth (and taught) the Four Tantras." These tantras (scriptures) are said to have emanated directly from the Buddha's enlightened form and are the doctrinal basis of Tibetan medicine.

Dhonden, personal physician to HH the Dalai Lama for many years and regarded as one of the foremost practitioners of Tibetan medicine, lectures with what can be described as an excellent bedside manner. He demonstrates an encyclopedic grasp of his topic while also being accessible on a personal level. Many personal anecdotes (often quite humorous) are effective at providing a broader and humanizing context to his detailed knowledge. In one anecdote, he tells of an ordinary old monk who consciously dies in a relaxed manner, thus directly revealing the joy concurrent with releasing attachment to the physical body.

The chapters are structured as a series of lectures given by the author to a gathering of Western doctors and healing professionals. The body of the lectures allows Dhonden to dive deep into the intricate foundations and methods of Tibetan healing. More than just a litany of disease causes and cures, Dhonden provides concise descriptions of how the Buddha's enlightened omniscience gave rise to the foundational scriptures that underlay Tibetan medicine, just as the Buddha's teachings as a whole underlay Tibetan society. "…a physician should be imbued with… an altruistic aspiration to achieve spiritual awakening for the benefit of all beings." Anyone interested in Tibetan Buddhism in particular and mystic traditions in general will enjoy the Dhonden's retelling of many myths and stories that demonstrate how the enlightened mind necessarily gives rise to a deeply holistic healing system. "The physician's motivation is to first of all heal the patient, but he or she always prays that (the patient) proceeds on the path to enlightenment."

The engaging question and answer sessions after the main lectures provide insights into the author's life and journey as a Buddhist healer. That Buddhism is the underlying foundation of his healing art provides a richness and spirituality to some of his detailed medical descriptions that would otherwise be dry and tedious. For those not interested in highly detailed and clinical descriptions of Tibetan healing theory, they can be skimmed over without detracting from the book's overall value. The book is most engaging when the focus widens and we see the connections between Tibetan medicine, culture, Buddhism and Dhonden's own growth as a master healer.
TOM R. CHILDERS (May / June 2000)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author provided free copies of his/her book to have his/her book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the author for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love and make no guarantee that the author will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade

Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.