

Compassion As Medicine

The Charter for Compassion tells us that “compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.”

In the middle of May, the community of Salina, Kansas will have a unique opportunity to experience compassion from the point of view of Tibetan medicine where compassion is viewed as a remedy. Tibetan physicians speak of compassion *as medicine*, rather than compassion *in medicine*. This is an important and remarkable distinction in modern medicine, where appointments with physicians are often very brief and may involve testing with technological equipment that can leave one void of human touch and understanding. With good health so important to all, we can benefit greatly from entering into the healing dialogue with ourselves and others by opening to this different cultural view of medicine and the healing arts.

Dr. Jampa Yonten is a senior physician and practitioner of Tibetan Medicine. He is visiting Salina, Kansas from May 10th to the 13th and will present some informational talks as well as have appointments with patients, certainly an uncommon cultural experience for central Midwest prairie dwellers. Dr. Yonten has written a book titled *Compassion As Remedy In Tibetan Medicine, Healing through Limitless Compassion*. The following manuscript excerpts reveal the importance of compassion in Tibetan medicine and its potential health care value for all of us.

“Compassion remains the most important ingredient in understanding one’s own and others’ problems. Compassion is a natural, innate and instinctual aspect of our being. It arises first from our own experience of suffering, and our witnessing of others’ suffering. It is generated and amplified by gratitude. This is easily experienced when one recalls one’s parents or those who nurtured us, teachers, children or friends. Compassion arises without cause or condition; it is the aspect of our minds that generates warmth and communication.”

“Recognition of the preciousness of other sentient beings promotes compassion, a sense of caring. The foundation of this caring should not be grounded in feeling pity towards other sentient beings. Some may regard those who are suffering as inferior or worthy of our pity. Not so! Instead we must learn to cultivate a sense of caring for and recognition of the preciousness of all sentient beings.”

“Tibetan Medicine is called *Sowa Rigpa*, which means the “Science of Healing”. *Sowa Rigpa* is an integrative, holistic, and profound system ~~consisting of eight branches of medicine, eleven sections of learning, fifteen occasions of healing, and four sutras of~~

explanation. ~~Sowa Rigpa~~ which can be distilled into understanding the basis of the healthy body and unhealthy body, the actions of healing, the methods of healing, and the qualities of the physician.”

“We often hear stories about the person whose experience at a hospital was transformed by one doctor, one nurse, a single technician or individual who really made an effort to care for the patient and the family. This is usually thought of as the exception. In Tibetan Medicine, however, these qualities are taught and practiced as a standard expectation of the healer. According to the His Holiness the Dalai Lama, “The ideal physician is one who combines sound medical knowledge with compassion and wisdom.”

Hopefully, there are many ways that each of us experience compassion in our daily lives in our homes and in our community. Here is an unusual chance to expand the experience of compassion and health and to begin to have a taste of how an ancient medicine “works tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures”.

Feel free to share your own comments and experiences of compassion as medicine with the Spiritual Resource Center at www.spiritualityresourcecenter.com.

Willow Leenders, May 2014