



Review Paper

Healing power of the environment: traditional dimensions

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Abstract

For thousands of years, traditional and ancient practices have proven their effectiveness in using the healing power of the environment and elements, such as water, air, fire, and space. In the past, people used to live healthy and heal without scientific methods; however, in modern days, as long as there is a market for sick people, many of these elemental remedies have not and will not be promoted universally. Therefore, it is our duty to debunk the position that biomedical treatment is the best practice. Our collective effort to highlight and close the gaps in disparities alongside researching, seeking alternative healing methods, and fully integrating the environment's healing power will allow us to understand that Earth's treasures are of immeasurable value and need to be consumed to give us an increasingly healthy life.

Keywords: Traditional healing, environment, water, air, space, social development, health care disparities.

Introduction

Global expenditures increase annually in several categories. Developed countries are spending more money on health care every year. Health care spending in the United States, for example, increased by 5.3% in 2014, reaching an average of \$9,523 per person¹. For many, health care has transmogrified from an intransigent necessity to a commodity to which many will no longer acquiesce. The crippling cost of health care and medical insurance has left many wondering how they will properly support themselves, their children, and their parents.

For many, natural healing methods are foreign. A 2008 study of 23,393 adults aged 18 years old or older showed that only 38.3% of adults used nonconventional medicine³. Comparatively, 9,417 children aged 17 years old or younger used nonconventional medicine, or about 11.8% of children in the United States². Health is defined by the World Health Organization as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Salvation of the environment and the need to return to an eco-physical worldview is an imminent concern that is gaining increasing attention across the world. This goal can be accomplished only if we stop seeing human beings and nature as binaries in divisive terms and see the entire cosmos as one throbbing entity with its various components codependent on one another.

A vision of interconnectedness and eco spirituality has to be nurtured to save the planet. This vision is being emphasized in various domains. From cultural, spiritual, political, and religious arenas to schools, hospitals, and offices, many individuals are

concentrating on how nature can be saved and preserved for future Earth. Indigenous knowledge systems and animistic outlooks from Pagan wisdom are gaining wide audiences, and people are starting to open their eyes and mind to understand the benevolence of nature and the universe. A return to home remedies, planting trees, more outdoor activities, and even ancient rituals and ceremonies are being brought forward to meet the crisis.

The natural aspects, ease of use, cost effectiveness, and lack of dangerous side effects make elemental medicinal use a highly attractive alternative. However, many individuals in developed countries simply have a dearth of knowledge about natural medicines. The elements of water, air, fire, and space not only have modern-day uses, but thousands of years of history proving their effectiveness.

Conceptual Framework

So-called *primitivism* has a complicated history. Whenever native cultures have encountered modernism and urban culture, there have been struggles to maintain cultural identity and traditional practices. This friction has been most apparent in the issue of health care and healing practices in tribal cultures³.

Whether a result of isolation from Western culture, lack of access to economic resources, or neo reaction to modern technology that does not serve sacred ideals, traditional health is culturally accepted, advanced in societies, and effective in promoting health outcomes, making it a topic worthy of review. In light of this information, a reconsideration of traditional health practices is warranted.

Disparities in Global Health Care Systems

World health care expenditures exceed \$4 trillion annually⁴. However, there are wide disparities in per capita health care, ranging from \$25 in sub-Saharan Africa to more than \$7,000 in the United States⁴. This is a universally present yet perniciously invisible problem in societies that put progress ahead of people. Basic human rights cannot be achieved in structures of power that do not serve the needs of the poor and underprivileged⁵. The current biomedical-based health care system is becoming increasingly inaccessible to the majority of peoples. In most developing countries and impoverished communities, equipment and drugs in biomedical treatment plans are becoming increasingly expensive, which is why the disparity presents itself as a universal issue⁶. Looking for solutions to this problem purely from the West is unlikely to be satisfactory. Ghandi's social philosophy of *swadeshi*, the principle that social freedom and the ability to determine a country's course, comes from self-reliance on native human, technological, and spiritual resources.

Solutions that should be considered are traditional practices that can be integrated with biomedical practices to create a more holistic and comprehensive health care system⁷. For this approach to be successful, there needs to be communication and cooperation between the two practices⁶. One cannot be seen as superior to the other, but instead the two should be seen as necessarily working together to create a complete treatment plan that is best for the patient⁶. This can only occur if traditional practices are scientifically researched and regulations, standards, and methodologies are formed to establish evidence-based practices that are consistent and effective⁸. There must also be mandatory training and education for people to practice these traditional methods⁸. The formalization of traditional practices will increase their validity, reliability, and legitimacy⁶. The availability and cost of traditional medicines in many areas of the world also make them desirable⁹.

Traditional Health Practices in the Modern Health Care Context

Traditional health practices exist but there is a strong need to take a more in-depth look at their benefits as a solution to the disparities that exist for countless reasons. Several limitations can be highlighted within the conventional care system. The use of chemical-based drugs has created drug-resistant bacteria and drug resistance among individual people⁶. People also experience adverse reactions to chemical drugs and other complications that discourage the continuance of these treatments⁷. In some cases, biomedical treatments have been ineffective, such as with degenerative, stress-related, and chronic diseases⁷. These diseases are often not bacteria based, and therefore alternative treatments must be considered.

Overall, the biomedical-focused health care system often ignores socioeconomic, environmental, and psychosocial factors that affect the healing process¹⁰. Evidence has shown that individuals' health is affected by poverty, the developmental

status of their community, and their ecosystem¹⁰. Current biomedical practices are also harvesting biological resources at an unsustainable rate, meaning the resources needed for these treatments may not be available in years to come¹⁰.

Cultural context is also an important factor affecting health. The cultural values of an individual determine beliefs and behaviors relating to health⁶. Spirituality and practices related to wellness are shown to be predictors of health outcomes⁶. The importance of an individual's socio cultural and economic context to health is evident, and therefore health care must focus on the person as a whole and not just as a biological being.

Traditional medical practices address the gaps left by biomedical-based practices⁷. Traditional medicine integrates the biological with emotional, mental, spiritual, and environmental factors in the healing process⁶. It has been shown to be successful in disease prevention, treatment of non-communicable diseases, and mental health; areas insufficiently addressed by biomedicine⁸. It allows for patient choice and is in line with patients' values and beliefs, promoting empowerment of the patient and confidence in the success of treatment⁶. This creates equity of health care coverage among all individuals and the continuance of practices in the long term⁶.

Throughout the world, traditional healing practices are used to treat various maladies. Although sometimes used in tandem with Western medicine, they receive special respect due to perceived or objective effectiveness, cultural allegiance, and historical use. In Europe, Romani health practices are often based on elemental properties, spiritual practices, and the lack of access to health care clinics, possibly due to cultural marginalization and lack of access to health care¹¹. North American Indian tribes have used sweat lodges, so-called "spirit walking," and the engagement of shamans to cleanse individuals¹¹. One of the oldest shamanic healing traditions documented is practiced by the Koïriti people of Bolivia and Chile. Shamans in their culture made clay whistles called *huacas* circa 10,000 BC¹². These whistles were played in group ceremonies to induce trance states and meditation and to visualize the world^{13;12}. This ancient practice has been rediscovered and introduced into meditation and breath work practice¹⁴. The traditional medicine of Asia is ancient and variegated. This medicine can be found wherever emigrants from Asia have settled¹⁵. Perhaps the country where traditional medicine is the most heavily integrated with modern medical practice is India. Throughout the subcontinent, it is commonplace to see modern hospitals that have integrated the science of today with practices such as yoga, Dhyanam, and Ayurveda. The respect given to these field is based on the concept of total health, which can be achieved through an appreciation of the body, mind, and spirit. Music therapy has come into use for many forms of treatment. The use of global traditional music genres in this type of treatment is due to its universal nature¹⁶. It seems clear that a further investigation into this area is warranted. There could be economic benefits to

health systems besides improving access to health care in communities that suffer from health disparities.

Earth and Traditional Beliefs

The Earth, with her landmasses, water bodies, mountains, valleys, plains, swamps, grasslands, and forests, is not just the planet on which we reside. The Earth is the basis of our existence, the root of our being. All cultures recognized the importance of Earth for the sustenance of human life, and thus in every cultural system we see an ardent reverence and worship of Earth as a life giver, preserver, and even destroyer and thus a creator of new forms and an embodiment of change. These practices of Earth worship, healing, and orientation that were part of the lives of various people across cultures are now being scientifically studied.

Water: Earth is a water-based planet, and its life is sustained because its surface composed of about 80% water. Of the water on the planet, only 1% qualifies as drinking water and is shared among the entire population. The human body is made up of 70% water. We know that we cannot survive without water, so we are advised to drink at least 12 glasses of pure water daily to ensure healthy function of the bodily systems. Civilizations have worshipped water, sanctifying its unique life-preserving ability and considering it as a primary element without which no life can survive. Many cultures have prayers and rituals thanking water.

Water symbolism is a common concept in various religious and traditional beliefs across the world. Most cosmological beliefs involve the creation of the Earth and its life from water. Thus, water in most cultures either becomes god or a strong medium to god. Water and water bodies have also played a big role in building civilizations and societies. According to Sankara Mishra and other Vaisheshika writers, noneternal forms of water are of three kinds, namely the body, sense organ, and object (*shariram*, *indriyam*, and *vishayam*). The *Bhavaprakash Nighantu* is a Sanskrit Ayurvedic text believed to be written by Bhavamishra in the 16th century that contains a systematic scientific study and classification of water. In it there are various synonyms of water, given in Sanskrit, that state the various vibrant qualities of water-*pani*, *salila*, *neera*, *ambu*, *vari*, *toya*, *udaka*, *ambha*, *amrit*, and *ghanarasa*¹⁷. The *Nighantu* tells us that water refreshes, prevents fatigue and drowsiness, quenches thirst, eliminates vomiting tendencies, awakens consciousness, cleanses, energizes, and satisfies¹⁷.

Water received sanctified status by ancient men. Hippocrates studied the therapeutic abilities of water. In Western philosophy, Thales, a pre-Socratic philosopher from Miletus in Asia Minor, proposed that everything in the universe is made of one substance, water¹⁸. According to Aristotle, Thales believed that even the Earth rests on water. Conversely, Xenophanes believed that all things were made of earth and water¹⁸.

The Bible has innumerable references to water and its might. In the Bible's Ezekiel 43, the glorified voice of the Lord is compared to the noise of many rivers. One of the priests of the early Christian church, Tertullian, emphasizes in *De Baptismo* the significance of water. He said that water was the first seat of the divine spirit, who then preferred it to all other elements. ... It was water that was first commanded to produce living creatures... it was water which, first of all, produced that which has life¹⁹. Tertullian tells us that Wherever Christ is there is water. He was baptized in water, he inaugurates marriage with water (John 2:7-11), he invites those who are thirsty to drink his everlasting water (John 4:14), he walks on water (Matthew 14:25), and when he receives a wound during his passion water bursts forth from his side (John 19:34)²⁰. The Bible also states that The Holy Spirit is the water that gives life (John 4:14)²¹. This symbolic representation of water is described as the Spirit, as the liquid God who imbues all life-sustaining bodily fluids—blood, mucus, milk, sweat, urine—with flowing divine presence and power²¹. The Spirit is of water and represents the nectar like succulent life on Earth.

In Buddhism, water is considered a symbol of purity and clarity. The *bodhisattva* Jalavahana (Water Bringer) is praised for having organized a transport of water to a pond where ten thousand fish were threatened by desiccation (*Suvarna Bhasottama-sutra*, ch.17)²¹. In Judaism, water is revered and is used extensively for cleansing rituals.

According to the Yoruba tribes of Nigeria, the world was originally covered in water. Various Nigerian communities believe in the holistic and healing abilities of water and worship the water god, Osun. Yoruba people believe that disease of the body is a misfortune caused mainly due to the imbalance of body fluids and water, which can occur due to an evil spell²². They believe that most bodily ailments and evil charms can be cured by using water in various methods. Yorubas use pure water in almost all healing processes, even while preparing medicine holding vessels and other tools.

Air: Air is breath and thus the life energy in all of us. Air also represents the sound present in the universe. Air also forms the winds and storms. In magical terms, Air is the power of the mind, the force of intellect, inspiration, and imagination. It is ideas, knowledge, dreams and wishes. Air is the element of new life and new possibilities and is essential to spells and rituals of travel, instruction, finding lost items, some types of divination, and freedom. Air aids us in visualization, a vital technique in magic²³.

In the Indian *Vedas*, air is a deity, the Vayu Devan. In Sanskrit, air is called *Vayu*. Vayu is also the god of air. In the human body, Vayu is present in five forms according to Ayurveda: *prana*, *udana*, *samana*, *vyana*, and *apana*²⁴. The *Chandogya Upanishad* gives information regarding the five Vayus. Any imbalance in the Vayus in the body causes uneasiness and health issues. Prana Vayu is located in the chest, head, throat,

tongue, mouth, and nose and is related to the sense organs of the mind and intellect²⁴. Udana Vayu is located in the throat, chest, and umbilicus and is associated with speech, positive mental strength, energy, joy, and enthusiasm²⁴. Samana Vayu is located in the stomach along with digestive fire. It ignites the digestive fire²⁴. Vyana Vayu is the air that moves around the body and helps in all physical functions, like physical movements, circulation and independence of the mind²⁴. Apana Vayu is located in the bladder, thighs, anus, and colon and assists with bodily elimination of urine, semen, stool, menstruation, and childbirth²⁴.

In the *Chandgya Upanishad*, the importance of prana is narrated through a story in which other bodily organs realize the superiority of prana, because they start dying when prana leaves the body¹⁷. Prana is the spiritual representation of air, who is also a god. ... It is a form of the Brahman. ... Prana constantly moves throughout the body as if it is present everywhere all the time. ... It is the life, force, energy, action and the Brahman that keeps us alive and active till it is there in the body¹⁷. Individuals with asthma suffer from heavy breathing, excessive coughing, shortness of breath, and fatigue. In Ayurveda, this is called *swaasa* and is life threatening when prana cannot enter the body, provoking great fear, anxiety and even fear of death²⁵. The solutions Ayurveda offers are yoga, *pranayama*, and avoiding environmental conditions that cause asthma like dust, smoke, air pollution, cold, and dryness²⁵.

Regarding the Greek philosophical tradition, Anaximenes considered air to be the fundamental substance and most primitive element. He was of the view that The soul is air; fire is rarefied air; when condensed, air becomes first water, then, if further condensed, earth, and finally stone¹⁸.

According to ancient medicine, air is associated with bodily essence. The Chinese practice of *chi-gung* is a combination of meditative breath control and body kinesthetic. Chi-gung is a combination of tribal and ceremonial *da-wu* (great dance), which is believed to have therapeutic benefits. It is a slow-moving, aerobic, and therapeutic dance and can promote health through guiding and gathering chi (*dao-yin*). This dance combines breath control with rhythmic movements of the body and was formed based on natural animal movements²⁶. Qi is the life energy in traditional Chinese medicine and belief. Qi includes *yin* and *yang*. There are three different origins of Qi related to the human. Yuan-qi, or original Qi, is determined at the moment of conception. Gu-qi is grain Qi derived from digested foods. Kong-qi, which is natural air Qi, comes from the air one breathes²⁷. Traditional Chinese medicine states that Vayu has two tanmatras: shabda and sparsha, which is touch²⁷.

Buddhists have a practice of sending silent prayers through the breath of nature²⁸. The mantras and powerful symbols are inscribed on flags and hung so that the flutter of the wind carries the positive energy of the prayer everywhere. According to Timothy Clark:

The prayer flag tradition has a long continuous history dating back to ancient Tibet, China, Persia and India. The tradition has now reached the West and is rapidly gaining popularity. The meanings behind prayer flag texts and symbols, indeed behind the whole idea of prayer flags, are based on the most profound concepts of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy.

Fire: Various myths in the world's many cultures, fire is seen as vital and life sustaining, which is viewed as a privilege of the gods in the heavens. The fire element is represented by the sun god in many primordial civilizations. In Hinduism, the sun god is called the Karma Sakshi, which translates as the eye of the God, and presides over every action²⁹. Even before modern science discovered the various rays and frequencies of sun's rays and its effect in generating vitamin D, the *Rigveda* accorded the sun with divine healing properties, capable of healing any physical or mental imbalances. The chant acknowledging the sun god called Gayathri Mantra is the most potent of mantras. In Patanjali's *Yogasutra*, the *asanas* (yoga postures) composing *suryanamaskara* (a routine known as sun salutation) have a poignant position. The *Vedas* have numerous hymns praising the god of fire (Agni) and the sun god (Surya or Savitar). Solar worship in India is practiced today. All rituals and prayers are offered in the presence of fire. There are numerous sun gods and deities mentioned in the *Rigveda*, indicating the different qualities of the sun. These include Surya, Savitr, the Aśvins, Mitra, Vivasvān, Viṣṇu, Bhāga, Aryaman, Pūṣan, Āditya, and the goddesses Uṣas and Sūrya²⁹. The names address the sun god as creator, fatherly, friendly, oceanic, ruler, brightness, life, preserver, heat, strength, builder, and protector³⁰. The presence of the sun god is common to all ancient cultures. Greeks defined the sun god as Helios. The image of a sun god riding a golden chariot across the sky is also a common image. Eleven chants in *Rigveda* are devoted to the sun god, Surya, inclosing the supreme Gayathri mantra.

The Greek Ionian mystic Heraclitus regarded fire as a fundamental substance and believed that everything like the flame in a fire was born out of the death of something¹⁸. For him, fire was the primordial element from which everything else was born. He also regarded the soul as a mixture of the noble fire and the ignoble water¹⁸. He viewed the soul, which has a prominent fire element, as dry, and a dry soul is the wisest and best¹⁸. According to Pythagoras, all planets, including the sun, moved in circles around the central fire¹⁸. This central fire, according to him, is the realm of Zeus. The mother of gods and the sun itself drew power from the central fire¹⁸. Zeno the Phoenician opined that Originally there was only fire; then the other elements-air, water, earth, in that order-gradually emerged. But sooner or later there will be a cosmic conflagration, and all will again become fire¹⁸. For Aristotle, everything in the universe is an ever-living, transforming fire. Aristotle stated in *Meteorology*³¹:

What we commonly call fire ... is not really fire, for fire is an excess of heat and a sort of ebullition; but in reality, of what we

call air, the part surrounding the earth is moist and warm, because it contains both vapor and a dry exhalation from the earth³¹.

Greek philosophy compares God, or Zeus, to divine energy and fire. According to the Greeks' understanding of bodily essence, yellow bile represents the fire element.

The prophet Jakob Lorber wrote a book in 1851 that is said to be based on the revelations of Jesus. This book contains methods to collect and use the sun's life-giving energy to cure diseases:

On March 15th, 1840, our Lord, Jesus Christ, selected Jakob Lorber to serve as His scribe, and record what was dictated to him. He served in this capacity for 24 years, and in that time-frame wrote 25 volumes, every one of which is a fantastic disclosure of information from our Father to His children. This important revelation about the healing power of sunlight was received by Jakob Lorber through the Inner Word, in Graz, Austria in the year 1851³².

Fire is symbolized using the upright triangle. In the Judeo-Christian esoteric belief system Kabbalah, the fire element has a prominent place. The fire symbol is the vertical triangle of the six-pointed Star of David. The archangel of fire is Michael. The word *pyramid* is derived from the Greek word *pyramis*, which means fire in the middle³³. Besides the obvious pyramid structures of Egypt, many Hindu and Tibetan temples and other primordial monuments of religious significance have pyramid structures. In many neopaganistic and freemasonry rituals, fire occupies a prominent place. In Celtic witchcraft, rituals are conducted around a bonfire or cauldron fire. In Buddhism, the fire element is defined as that by which one is warmed, ages, and is consumed, and that by which what is eaten... gets completely digested³⁴. Fire is associated with warmth, passion, heat, and consumption. Fire also depicts our innermost desires.

Space: Ether, space, sky, and sound vibration all form an essential element. Ether is the space, the emptiness that all other elements occupy to constitute matter. It also carries the vibration of our thoughts. All matter is composed of vibrations. Aether is composed of sound, thus sound is the most important aspect of spiritual advancement. Space is also referred to as *aether*, spirit, vacuum, and universe in various philosophies. Everything is created from space, exists in space, and finally, returns to space. Space represents the experience that arises in awareness, as the content of awareness, but it is not something other than awareness³⁵. When the space element is balanced within us, we are more welcoming and more accommodating. We have enough of everything. We are not dissociated from experience nor completely caught by it. We feel rooted in being who we are³⁵.

The vision of the universe as connected by sound vibrations exists in many cosmological beliefs across cultures, spiritual

traditions, and religious texts, where we find numerous references to the power of sound to heal, create, generate, transform and give birth to new ideas and heightened conscious awareness³⁶.

In Hinduism, it is believed that everything in nature is created and sustained by the five basic elements, called *Pancha Mahabhuta Tatva* in Sanskrit, which literally means five majestic or divine spirit elements: *Bhumi* (earth), *Vayu* (air), *Ap* or *Jala* (water), *Agni* (fire), and *shunya* (space or void). Thus, each *chakra* in ascending order represents each element and thus forms the inner energy passage in human body, rooting it to the Earth and expanding it to the cosmos. The five elements also represent five color frequencies, ranging from red, representing the earth, to deep blue, representing the sky. In Hinduism, all gods have an associated musical instrument. Thus, Krishna has the flute, Shiva has a small *dumro* (drum), and Saraswathi has the *veena* (stringed instrument). According to *Vedas*, the sky is the plane where gods and men meet and communicate. It is believed that space was the first thing to be created and from which other beings came into being. Some scriptures say that space is eternal and will always exist. From space, the dimensions of length, breadth, and thickness were created. The cardinal directions and four angles (northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest) were also created. Time and space was created. These dimensions are infinite¹⁷.

Hinduism and Buddhism use mantras extensively, because chanting is an important aspect of their rituals. In Buddhism, *akash* is the space on which all matter and elements rest and is divided into limited space and infinite space. Through the chanting of mantras, the practitioner becomes free from ego consciousness and ascends to identify the self with the cosmic self. Thus, chanting mantras are used in the path to *moksha*, which opens the door to *samadhi*, or ultimate bliss³⁷. In Jainism, *akasha* is the space that supports everything. The space is divided into *loakasa*, which is the space of the material world, and *aloakasa*, which is the void and empty space. In the book *Tibetan Sound Healing* by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, the five warrior syllables are introduced. According to Rinpoche, meditating on these syllables helps the individual connect to the inner authentic self. These syllables are *a*, *om*, *hung*, *ram*, and *dza*, which are the seed syllables, for they possess the essence of enlightenment³⁵.

According to Greek mythology, the space or akash is known as aether. Aether is a demigod. In Latin, this fifth element is referred to as quintessence. Ancient Greek philosophers also acknowledged the existence of space as a void. They attempted to distinguish between matter and void¹⁸. For Plato, aether is the bright upper atmosphere in which gods lived, whereas men lived in the dense lower atmosphere³⁸. Aristotle classified aether as the fifth element. For Aristotle, aether was different from the other elements. He said that it has no specific qualities, it is unchangeable, it moved in circles, and makes no unnatural motion³⁸. Aristotle stated: The theory that the void exists

involves the existence of place: for one would define void as place bereft of body¹⁸.

In Ancient Greece, the Greek philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras (580 to 500 BC) is considered to be the grandfather of sound healing. He is credited as the first person to take an organized approach to using music as a healing technique³⁹. He created the Pythagorean musical scale and mathematical formulas of musical tones and harmony. Pythagoras also talked about the presence of universal music: Each celestial body, in fact each and every atom, produces a particular sound on account of its movement, its rhythm or vibration. All these sounds and vibrations form a universal harmony in which each element...contributes to the whole³⁹. He also believed that music helped contribute to healing, good health, and stress release. Playing a lyre was considered beneficial to the body and psyche. By the 19th century, ether became known in physics as the field through which electromagnetic waves travel.

The Aboriginal people of Australia are among the first known cultures to heal with sound. Their *yidaki* (didgeridoo) has been used as a healing tool for at least 40,000 years⁴⁰. The Aborigines healed broken bones, muscle tears and illness of every kind using their enigmatic musical instrument⁴⁰. Shamanism in various cultures has extensively used sacred sounds during rituals dating back 50,000 years. It is said to have its origins in Siberia and Central Asia; however, shamanism and sound treatment has been prevalent in various primordial cultures including those in America³⁷. Shamans make steady and repetitive rhythms using drums and rattles to create an altered state of consciousness, a trance state³⁷. Thus, prayers to God, spoken out loud or thought, are powerful. Christian prayers are very powerful when read out loud. Prayers like Lord have mercy and Give us peace are very potent⁴¹.

The Cibecue Apaches of Northeastern Arizona have an intricate system of powers that is used for different purposes. There are up to fifty-five chants for each power, with each chant containing as many as twenty-six verses⁴¹. The rhythmic drumming of the Native Americans during their rituals and ceremonies has the power to induce a hypnotic trance⁴². Such rhythmic drumming and chanting act as concentration devices that prevent the mind from wandering. It has been scientifically proven that such repetitive constant drumming, chanting, or dancing can induce characteristic changes in brainwave, when measured using an EEG⁴³. Since hypnotic trance is a subjective state of consciousness, it is likely that rapid drumming anywhere from 160 to 400 beats per minute, continued for several minutes, can induce an altered state of consciousness in people who are motivated to experience such a state⁴².

Traditional Health Practices in Relation to Social Development

During the Beijing World Congress meeting in 2008, the World Health Organization requested that corporations around the

world, government, and health professionals ensure the proper use of traditional medicine as an important component contributing to health of all people⁴⁴. Throughout the centuries, promoting the health of humans, both physical and mental, has been approached using a variety of methods. When we choose to focus and integrate traditional health practices and biomedical practices together and highlight them as an effective solution to the problem at hand, it is directly relevant to social work.

Social work practice is based on considering the whole of the person in a biopsychosocial context. As previously described, traditional practices also relate the biological, psychological, and social aspects of a person's life together in treatment. The integration of traditional and biomedical practices is in line with the code of ethics of social work because the values social justice, dignity and worth of the person, and competence are congruent with this type of treatment⁴⁵. The socioeconomic and conservationist improvements of integrated health care system relative to a biomedical-based system promote social justice. This approach would increase health care access for vulnerable and oppressed groups and promote environmentally friendly practice. An integrated health care system acknowledges the dignity and worth of individuals by respecting cultural differences and allowing self-determination in selecting a treatment plan. Last, an integrated health care system would increase the competence of health care. The addition of traditional practices would expand the types of treatments available, and therefore allow for more options to identify the treatment that best meets an individual's needs.

However, even with this knowledge, as pharmaceutical companies have thrived, the number of individuals choosing natural healing methods have dwindled. Systematically, the government chooses not to fund nonconventional medicine and practice due to the lack of national laws and safeguards put in place for patients⁴⁴. Corporations continually endorse medical solutions, whereas studies have shown the healing power of air, space, fire, and water is significant.

When individuals turn to the practices of traditional medicine, we learn that there is a focus on maintaining, protecting, and restoring our physical and mental health⁴⁶. Practitioners fixate on medicated solutions rather than the natural restorative journey. Methods to maintain or restore health via a holistic approach include addressing an individual's family, culture, work, community, history, and environment⁴⁶. Physicians and patients often hold discrepant models of health and illness that may affect the effectiveness of communication during the clinical visit⁴⁷. Clear communication is crucial for quick recovery and maintenance. Without practitioners being open minded about multiple recovery paths, this could be an upward battle for those who maintain a cultural belief. Taking into account the interrelationship of body, mind, and spirit allows people from all around the world to heal in a holistic manner. Although many transcultural practices were established in the mid-1960s, studies in this field are only now beginning to yield

significant results⁴⁸. Culture and community also influence beliefs about health, disease, and treatment, including introducing alternative methods of medicine. Many ethnic minorities lack adequate health literacy, leading to the use of home remedies⁴⁹. Respectfully recognizing that some individuals have cultural holistic methods of well-being, practitioners must consider: i. regulated medicine- sometimes doctors don't realize how meds react with other meds the person is on. This can lead to prescription drug addictions and dependencies. ii. holistic and alternative methods that are cultural and historic---they sometimes offer more of a lifestyle change with can also be positive. iii. lifestyle change can reduce stress, chemical and drug use, detox, and sometimes holistic methods take longer to receive results but they offer a journey of the self, through the self to the self-meaning its serving as a meditational, reflective, and sometimes awakening experience for the self and spirit. Because some communities do not have the appropriate resources to receive modern health care, they resort to home remedies and cultural health care methods.

In 2011, more than 450 million individuals were affected by mental health issues and an estimated 1 in 4 children will soon experience negative consequences of poor mental health⁵⁰. This is our call to action to spend time in nature walking around. Give yourself a moment to enjoy nature (air, space, fire, and water). Allow yourself to experience natural healing through ceremonial experiences or by visiting buildings that have therapeutic value. Community involvement and understanding of natural healing methods will create a safe space for individuals to heal and thrive in environments not controlled by big business and money. Overall, clinicians have the unique opportunity to advocate for clients by creating nontraditional literature, implementing new techniques in groups of support, and establishing a new path on the journey toward good mental and physical health and a better sense of overall social well-being.

Conclusion

There are apparent distinctions in how elemental therapies are used in various cultures, but whether through ancient religious texts and teachings or modern-day practices, there is a commonality. Earth provides us with much of what we need. Billion-dollar corporations continue to profit from our ignorance of natural healing. Using sound therapy to relax one's mood and stop one's mind from wandering provides an alternative to paying for overpriced medications, but studies from the 19th and 20th centuries are hidden so that pharmaceutical companies and all of the corporations that they fund can remain in financial superiority.

The ancient teachings of many civilizations give insight into the use and appreciation of Earth's gifts. Through the development of modern medicine, there has been a shift of dependency from natural healing methods to modern medicine and the high costs, side effects, and procedural dangers that follow. For all of mankind, especially for those cultures and regions that do not

reiterate the use of Earth's natural healing powers, there is still much to learn about how to properly care for ourselves and our Earth simultaneously.

Whether stated by First Nation Canadians or written in ancient Chinese manuscripts, it has been globally taught and accepted that respect for Earth is regarded as essential to sustaining not only a healthy lifestyle, but also a more comprehensive sense of self and spirituality. The knowledge and implementation of healing techniques that solely, if not mainly, involve resources found in nature give us the power to use cost-effective techniques to heal ourselves while treating our Earth and its natural resources respectfully.

Although we all may not share the Yoruba beliefs that water may rid a person of evil spirits, we as educated individuals cannot deny the usefulness of elements that are so easily accessed. The Earth's treasures do not simply exist to admire at a safe distance, but to consume to our full enjoyment while giving us a more enjoyable quality of life.

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