

## **Local medicines and Universal principles: How the healing principle can move but the medicine cannot.**

In recent times we have seen a plethora of people attempting to combine herbal understanding from all over the world, the goal being to form a sort of total herbal pharmacopeia encompassing all kinds of medicine, from the jungles of the Amazon to the frozen wastes of Iceland. The idea behind this is to gain a clear understanding of what all the energetic properties are for the human being. However while this seems logical and is in line with energetic medicine, there are still major issues because Western approaches to this topic would discount many traditional uses of herbs from which one can gain valuable understanding.

Although we live in a world where you can get on a plane and travel to the other side of the world in a day, the human being cannot easily acclimatize to the massive changes in the environment. A cold country dweller can't move to the tropics without relying heavily on air conditioning and conversely the tropical country person can't move to the Arctic without wearing so much extra insulation that they may have trouble walking. So when we are importing and exporting food and herbs from all over the world they are herbs are grown in regions that have utterly different conditions from those which we are used to at home, wherever that may be.

Just because we get over jet-lag we may think we are adapting to an environment, but this is not the same as actually being able to live and connect to the environment without the need for substantial control of it through methods of augmentation. Because we can move from one house to another or change from living in one micro-environment to another this does not mean we have acclimatized and gradually as the time goes on this may become a realization. The climate is not only defined by the temperature and foods but also by the other people in the environment, their mannerisms, the nature of how you fit into the culture, or not, all of the nuances and expression of a particular way of life. There is a common misconception that we "rule" the earth, it doesn't rule us, with little or no thought given to our actual connection with the earth. People all have different constitutions ascribed mainly by the diet that their ancestors ate several generations before. The food that they eat literally makes up the body. Foods and herbs used in cooking form the very structure of our body and the kinds of strengths and weaknesses of the systems of our body.

In the ancient Classic of Chinese medicine, the first volume of "The Yellow Emperor's Classic on Internal medicine" is called "Foundational questions" and the 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter of this book is called "Discriminative Treatments for patients of different regions". This very short chapter is perhaps one of the most vital in the whole of the Classic which is the foundational book of Taoist medicine. It simply describes the four directions from China: north, south, east and west and illustrates the different climates and different strengths and weakness of the indigenous people's energetic conditions because of their exposure to various patterns of temperature and ways of living, everything in fact. The result is that 5 expressions of treatment are forged which represent the 4 points of the compass and the centre. These treatments are born from the different regions to which they belong. People

in the world today comprise a mix of thousands of cultures, but we all generally have one place we stay, or we call home. If this place is temporary then it isn't home in the same way, but if it is permanent we have to start the process of acclimatization to this region. With the importation of foods and herbs from around the world, the choice on offer in supermarkets is endless, but what is actually sustainable and relevant to you now?

Simply, if a person lives in the region from whence they originate it is bound to be the case that the herbs and food from that area are will suit their body condition and nature far better than imported foods and herbs from elsewhere. Also the medical approach of this region will be best-suited to the people of this region, all the nuances of language and culture will work with clarity and affect a person deeply and completely if they come from the source. Every culture has their own way of understanding.

If we make it more complex and a person's ancestry hails from several different regions of the world then there will need to be a connection to what is going on in the place that they are, but also a constant supply of foods and medicines from elsewhere in order to provide what the body can optimally live on. This will probably need to continue for several generations until the group acclimatizes to the local foods and climate fully. Seven or eight generations and the people will have become native to the region of the world they have stayed in, but it does take a while and significant resources in order to do this. The nature of herbs grown in a specific region will be mainly useful for the people of that region. Therefore this makes herbal medicine, in fact any kind of energetic medicine, quite localized in an environment, especially herbs as they are grown and attached to the earth. The practitioner can move but then their techniques will need to adapt to wherever they go as the same technique in a different land will not work.

So what can be transported and remain the same? Fundamentally it's the principle or understanding or philosophy of the medicine which can be transported and not only that but will always be found throughout the ancient world to be utterly compatible. Indian, Chinese and Greek medicine are utterly unified in their understanding although their expressions will all be different and associated to cultural ways of expression. However the basic principles of adaptation to different climates as suggested in chapter 12 of the Yellow Emperor's Classic, are that environment and the peoples grown from that land are one.

Rather than trying to create a global herbalism, we should instead instead focus our efforts on looking towards a localization of medicine, understanding and thoroughly energetically connecting to herbs from the local region. There can never be one global treatment method or technique. We should look at what is happening in the local region to find what is appropriate, then use universal diagnostic principles, energetic energetic understanding and language, although what we do will vary according to the different peoples and their different problems. Doing a strong massage to an Indian woman may be too soft for a Norwegian woman with a similar problem. A herb grown in China may have an utterly different effect on the body of a Caucasian person than it does to a native Chinese.

Another problem with imported herbal medicine is that the properties of those herbs have been tested for thousands of years on a native population not on a population of foreigners. As a result it is only in this current generation that we see what the effect is of Chinese herbs on a western population, for some it works like a dream, others have real difficulty. The point is that western herbs would more likely treat the western body yet the principle for treating is exactly the same and the diagnosis may be the same. The healer can adapt their body-work technique as the energy is alive and functional, but the herb is a more stuck quality and while dosage can be augmented the nature of the herbs cannot be completely altered to suit an individual.

If we understand this issue we can see how it is the principle and language of medicine that is adaptive, whereas herbs and foods and techniques will be accustomed to suit the local population. This shows the nature of the understanding of healing in the paradox of there being a basic source understanding of Oneness, yet at the same time this Oneness manifests as myriad forms which have a natural order and energetic feel. Neither the seeming individuality nor the Oneness that contextualizes it can be ignored.

If one asks an indigenous person from anywhere around the world there will really only be one message to the white person....

*....go back home, and there find what is your land and know it and feel it. We cannot help you find what your ancestors know, we only know what we have been living for thousands of years connected to this land that is our mother. - anon*

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