INTRODUCTION

Little did I know, as I was standing in line at county services for my second divorce within one year, that my second husband was placing a 2 x 4 on the gas peddle of his car. As I signed the paper work, the garage filled with carbon monoxide. He was dead by the time I found him, hours later. My first reaction was to call my best friend, my first husband. As the fire trucks and ambulances rounded the corner, the police questioned why I had called him before them.

The journey that brought us to those depths, and lifted us from the ashes, was what led to the academic studies behind this documentary.

In the wake of my second husband's suicide, I began my academic studies in Complementary and Alternative Medicine at the University of Minnesota. It was through this that I was given the opportunity to explore the Tibetan philosophies in regards to the healing of suffering.

At 45, I took my first "study abroad" to India. The trip couldn't have been more timely. It felt as if fate itself had dropped this trip into my lap. It turned out to be a beautiful, demanding journey that tested the very theories I had traveled to learn, and, in the end, I was not only able to foster my own healing, but share that healing with others.

THE STORY

This 90-minute documentary weaves three stories together.

1. It is a personal story of a woman whose life changed very suddenly, searching for a way to heal.

2. It is the story of a medicinal tradition of healing, developed over the centuries, that continues to evolve to this day.

3. It is also the story of a country, whose history rolls like a tide in and out, marked by periods rich in art and academic achievement, and periods of civil war and exile.

DESCRIPTION OF VISUALS

A Fearless Weapon weaves these stories together using a combination of visual styles. It will incorporate footage from my original trip, as well as new footage of interviews with top ranking Tibetan officials and physicians, set to the backdrop of India's striking landscape. The documentary will also briefly outline Tibetan history and its foundational tenants for healing using historical footage of Tibet and their subsequent exile to India. Animation sequences, done in the style of Tibetan paintings, will be used as visuals for the early history and practice of Tibetan Medicine. The dramatization of one woman's journey through suffering to a place of healing will be woven throughout.
1. A PERSONAL JOURNEY

Three years after my second husband's suicide, an email appeared in my inbox. It described an independent research course in India. I had been learning about Tibetan Medicine in a course I was taking at the U of M. I knew the study abroad program would provide me the opportunity to synthesize my education and experiences into a meaningful academic paper. I also thought of this journey as a pilgrimage. And, as a pilgrimage should, it presented challenges that tested my integrity and dedication.

I was tested first, two weeks before my departure, when I received a letter from the director of the Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institution, TMAI, that they did not have the resources to assist me. I was devastated. I was unsure of what to do. But, here in my life was the practice from Yoga, Isvaranprandidhana, "laying your best work at the feet of God and not being attached to the outcome." I decided to go forward, plans or no plans.

To my surprise, the day I arrived was the first of two ten-day teachings given by the Dalai Lama. Every color, every race, every nationality, every age—all were there to seek peace and relieve suffering for themselves and their worlds.

As the journey progressed, I was faced with many challenges. Two miles from the glacial headwaters of the Ganges, my party and I were told that snow, on the summer solstice no less, would deny us access to our destination. But we made it there, as we made it up all of the other literal and metaphorical mountains this journey had provided.

2. THE TRADITION OF TIBETAN MEDICINE

Traditional Tibetan Medicine (TTM) is an interdisciplinary medical practice that has been growing and evolving since its conception over fourteen centuries ago. Today, TTM combines aspects of modern medicine with traditions pulled from both eastern and western practices.

Interviews with Dr. Pema Dorjee, a personal physician to His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, explains that Tibetan Medicine follows a very specific protocol for the healing of suffering. First, the individual is assessed for mental, emotional or physical poisons. Their diet is one of the first things that is addressed and changed. Next, the individual's family and community are called upon to help the person through their transition. If that doesn't help, medication is provided to the individual.

When all else fails, divination is used. Divination of some form exists within all cultures. In TTM, divination consists of astrology, shamanistic rituals, and even exorcism. As Tibetans move into the world at large, many of these traditions are falling out of use, and elders are stuck between clinging to past traditions or allowing the philosophies of TTM to help them evolve to the next level.

3. A BRIEF HISTORY

In the 6th Century AD, the Tibetan king, Namri Songsen, invited the most eminent physicians from India, China, Greece, Nepal, East Turkistan and Persia to attend the first known Medical Conference. The attending physicians each wrote a treatise. These treatises were later compiled into a seven-volume text called A Fearless Weapon. In the 8th Century, Tibet entered what is known as its "Golden Age," fostering a growth in arts and academia, and further developing principles which are still used in Tibetan Medicine today.

But, in the 10th Century AD, King Lang Dharma, a ruthless persecutor of Buddhism, was assassinated, and Tibet fell into civil war. For the next seven hundred years, Tibetan Medicine remained virtually in stasis. It wasn't until the 17th Century AD, with His Holiness, the 5th Dalai Lama, and the rebuilding of the Potala Palace, that Tibetan Medicine entered its second renaissance.

In 1949, the Chinese invaded Tibet. Within ten years, they homeland. The Chinese would shoot rounds and bombardments upch Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, followed by thousands of Tibetans, esc

CONCLUSION

Knowledge is the catalyst where healing can begin. The oldest way of learning is through storytelling. It is a tool for preserving memory and history. It can be educational, entertaining, and healing. By telling alternative stories, we share our connections with others and the world. Our stories reveal the truths about ourselves and our community; they reflect our experiences and point of view.

As His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, finished his teachings, he charged us to teach what we had learned to the world. This documentary is an effort to do so.
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