

Hands on Healing

Introduced to the Western world in the mid 1900s, Reiki is a 2,500 year-old Japanese healing technique that promotes harmony, wellbeing and rejuvenation on all levels. Rebecca Walker talks to Hong Kong-based Reiki Master, Pervin Shroff, about the benefits of hands-on healing.

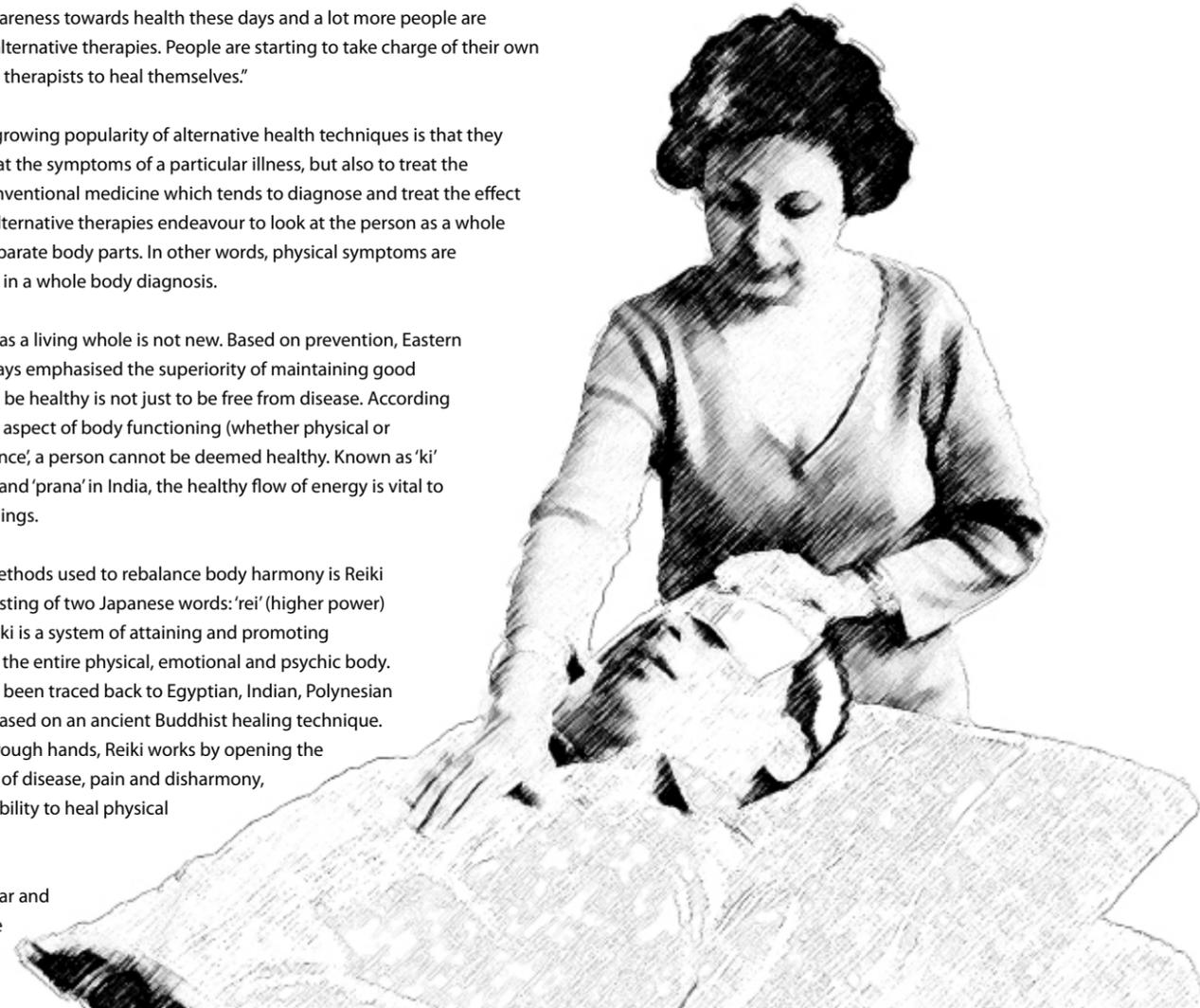
In the information age people are becoming more self-empowered and discerning in the management of their own health. Today, despite the fact that modern medical science has more to offer to people in terms of treatments and cures than ever before, people are increasingly turning to 'alternative' medical solutions to cure their physical ailments. Reiki Master, Pervin Shroff postulates, "There is more and more awareness towards health these days and a lot more people are discovering the benefits of alternative therapies. People are starting to take charge of their own health and are working with therapists to heal themselves."

A significant reason for the growing popularity of alternative health techniques is that they are designed not only to treat the symptoms of a particular illness, but also to treat the underlying cause. Unlike conventional medicine which tends to diagnose and treat the effect a disease has on the body, alternative therapies endeavour to look at the person as a whole and not as a collection of separate body parts. In other words, physical symptoms are simply the tip of the iceberg in a whole body diagnosis.

The philosophy of the body as a living whole is not new. Based on prevention, Eastern medical philosophy has always emphasised the superiority of maintaining good health over curing illness. To be healthy is not just to be free from disease. According to Eastern philosophy, if any aspect of body functioning (whether physical or psychological) is 'out of balance', a person cannot be deemed healthy. Known as 'ki' in Japan, 'chi' or 'qi' in China, and 'prana' in India, the healthy flow of energy is vital to the well being of all living things.

One of the oldest healing methods used to rebalance body harmony is Reiki (pronounced ray-key). Consisting of two Japanese words: 'rei' (higher power) and 'ki' (life force energy) Reiki is a system of attaining and promoting wholeness and wellbeing of the entire physical, emotional and psychic body. Whilst similar practices have been traced back to Egyptian, Indian, Polynesian and Asian cultures, Reiki is based on an ancient Buddhist healing technique. Characterised by healing through hands, Reiki works by opening the mind and spirit to the cause of disease, pain and disharmony, and accelerates the body's ability to heal physical ailments.

Mikai Usui, a Japanese scholar and Buddhist monk, initiated the



present 'Usui' Reiki system of healing towards the end of the 19th Century. As the legend goes, after spending 21 days fasting at the top of Mount Kurayama near Kyoto, Usui was struck by a ray of light from heaven that he accepted as a dramatic initiation into the healing power of the universal life force ('ki'). After this event, he developed Reiki healing, which gradually spread across Japan in the early 1900s and eventually into the West.

Reiki is not taught in the way that other healing techniques are taught. It is transferred to the student by the Reiki Master during an 'attunement' process. This is a very brief, yet very sacred ceremony in which the universal life force is channeled through the Reiki Master to the student, making them (the student) a 'vessel' for Reiki. Shroff asserts, "All people are born with an innate ability to heal, and attunement is simply a matter of activating that ability." As Reiki is transferred from master to student, energy flows from the top of the person's head (through the crown chakra) through the body and back out through the hands. The attunement process takes just a few minutes but once 'attuned', practitioners have Reiki for the remainder of their life. It does not wear off and is never lost.

One of the fastest growing natural therapies in the world, Reiki has become increasingly popular in recent years. An amazingly simple technique, it works by facilitating a smooth flow of 'ki'. Basically it is an energy channel that re-opens blocked pathways (meridians) and energy centres (chakras). In the same way that we need blood to flow freely through our body's circulatory system, we also need 'ki' (energy) to flow freely through our system of meridians. Simplified, one can say that the meridians are the equivalent of our blood vessels, but instead of transporting blood this system transports 'ki'. When there is a blockage in the meridians and the 'ki' no longer flows freely, sickness can occur.

Reiki treatments are safe and non-intrusive, and involve a simple exchange of energy between two people. During a Reiki treatment the patient sits or lies comfortably, fully clothed while the practitioner 'scans' the body for energy blockages. This simply means moving the hands a few inches above the body looking for 'hotspots' (areas of pain or disharmony). Shroff explains, "The hands seek out the place of blockage or pain point then the energies automatically flow to the parts of the body that need it most." Healing energy is then directed to areas of the head, the upper body (from neck to pelvic area) and the back (from shoulders to tail bone.) There are 12 basic hand positions in all which cover the entire body equally and although there are a few positions in which the practitioner is in contact with the patient (such as cradling the head), most Reiki treatments do not involve actual touching.

Lasting an hour or longer, Reiki is deeply relaxing and has an immediate calming effect. Throughout the treatment, energy flows via the Reiki practitioner to wherever it is required, activating the body's own natural ability to heal itself. Sensations experienced by the patient include warmth, a mild tingling in the body, or coolness. The energy channeled during a Reiki session flows through and around the patient and many people describe feelings of peace, security and wellbeing throughout a treatment. Reiki energy works at a very subtle level and sometimes the receiver may experience nothing physically and therefore think that Reiki is not working. However in many cases profound results become apparent in the following days or weeks. "Alternative therapies require patience, dedication and commitment," says Shroff. "Unlike quick fix medications, energy healing works on different levels - emotional, spiritual and physical - and may take

place on a level of which the patient is unaware. It is important for patients to remember that just because you cannot feel it, it doesn't mean it isn't working. The effects of Reiki may take time but ultimately it will work."

One of the key elements to a successful Reiki experience is a willingness of the person being healed to accept the energy and trust the Reiki practitioner. While Reiki is spiritual in nature, it is not a religion and has no belief system attached to it. It does not conflict with any medical treatment and Reiki will work whether you believe in it or not. Many times people are skeptical going into a session but come out feeling better without being able to explain why. "Whether or not they believe Reiki is helping, whether or not they think they are responding to it, the fact is that nothing can stop the flow of energy," states Shroff.

Reiki works safely and effectively on acute and chronic diseases, as well as anxiety, fatigue, depression and other symptoms that are caused by stress or imbalance in the energy system. Increasingly Reiki is also being used in hospitals as a complementary therapy for cancer patients to help combat the negative side effects of chemotherapy and radiation therapy. "Reiki is hugely beneficial for cancer patients because it protects the 'good' cells in the body and also helps emotionally and spiritually by projecting a sense of calm and peace," notes Shroff. The beneficial long-term effects of Reiki are all-encompassing and include increased energy and vitality, a strengthened immune system, accelerated healing, the cleansing of bodily toxins and improved overall health.

Reiki is simultaneously curative and preventative and a person does not have to be ill to reap its benefits. Known as one of the best methods of stress relief, Reiki is used by countless people as a simple wellbeing tool. Regular Reiki treatments also increase energy in the body and aid the body's reserve of built-in defences which ultimately strengthens and stabilises the immune system. "Reiki works on many different levels. Whether you have small aches and pains that need treating, need a spiritual or emotional booster or a shot of energy and joy, Reiki energy is all-encompassing," summarises Shroff.

The essence of Reiki is as alive today as it was hundreds of years ago when it was recorded in the ancient Buddhist Sutras. As the world's population continues to grow and more people continue to search for health alternatives, it is likely that the popularity of holistic treatments such as Reiki will continue to rise.

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