



# ANCIENT WISDOM FOR WESTERNERS

## A Short Introduction to Tibetan Medicine

Marilyn Magazin

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A Short Introduction  
to Tibetan Medicine



*Marilyn Magazin*

AEON

First published in 2022 by  
Aeon Books

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A C.I.P. for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN-13: 978-1-91350-496-0

Cover image: Medicine Buddha and Tibetan Plants from  
[traditionalartofnepal.com](http://traditionalartofnepal.com)  
Illustrations by Phoebe Young

Typeset by Medlar Publishing Solutions Pvt Ltd, India  
Printed in Great Britain

[www.aeonbooks.co.uk](http://www.aeonbooks.co.uk)



*I dedicate this book posthumously to  
Geshe Lobsang Tengye, Jacques Haesaert and  
Brigitte Jordan, who were my precious teachers,  
therapists, and dear friends. I also dedicate this book  
to Dr. Lobsang Shrestha, who continues to teach me.*



*There is always something that can be done—  
even if it's not the perfect solution.*





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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to my fellow members of the Association Ambroisie for their encouragement to use my personal learning experiences to write this introduction, and for their permission to include some figures from their book, *Introduction to Tibetan Medicine: Teachings of Jacque Haesaert*. I am also grateful to my sister, Pam O'Neil, and to Susan Peters who made many useful edits.



## PREFACE

My work over a period of forty years as a research scientist and my interest in natural health incited my study with Tibetan medicine practitioners. I had the great fortune of discovering Tibetan Buddhism thirty years ago, at the Institut Vajra Yogini in France. In 1998, I began to study there with Jacques Haesaert (1942–2009), French naturopath and Tibetan medical doctor. He was taught by Dr. Ama Lobsang Dolma and Dr. Tsering Dinggang in India and then joined Mother Theresa’s volunteers in Calcutta. After returning to Europe, Jacques Haesaert gave consultations and taught Tibetan medicine for more than thirty years in France and Spain. His wish was to bring together Tibetan medicine and Western medicine so their complementarity could be understood and utilized.

Jacques Haesaert and his students in France created Ambroisie, a non-profit association for the study and preservation of Buddhist Tibetan medicine, in 1991. After his passing, his students in France compiled an introduction to Tibetan medicine based on his teachings and notes. I have translated this book, *Tibetan Medicine—Medicine of Light: Teachings of Jacques Haesaert*, from French to English. His wish was to participate in the preservation of the authenticity and richness of this medical tradition, and the result is this comprehensive



book with details of what he learned from his teachers and through his experience as a Tibetan doctor.

My intent here is to introduce readers, in a simple way, to this ancient wisdom, explaining why Tibetan medicine is so effective and suggesting ways to lead healthier and happier lives. I especially hope to incite the curiosity of Western physicians, for them to share what they learn from these pages with their own patients. Years of scientific investigation convinced me that the answers to many questions about the human body and disease can be found in traditional medicine systems.

Jacques Haesaert inspired me to remain in the spirit of the teachings, as he always did, rather than transmit literal teachings of Tibetan medicine that otherwise would have little value for most Westerners. This book will teach you of the origins of Tibetan medicine, and you will find some explanations of Tibetan Buddhist terms, as well as some specific advice that can directly benefit you. For this to be useful, one needs to be willing to make changes.

I have included some quotes and figures from *Tibetan Medicine—Medicine of Light, Teachings of Jacques Haesaert*. I have also included some specific information from translations of consultations and teachings by Dr. Lobsang Shrestha, with whom I continue to study Tibetan medicine.

## INTRODUCTION

Tibet, a mystic land nested in the Himalayan mountains, remained isolated from the rest of the world for many centuries. Only recently has its medical system become the object of international interest, thanks to meetings between Western and Tibetan physicians and scientists, through the initiatives of the Dalai Lama. He has directed the effort to preserve the comprehensive healing tradition and all the other aspects of the rich Tibetan culture.

To understand the workings of Tibetan medicine, we need to open our minds to new concepts and notions, for we are entering into this world of intangible components that include invisible beings and spiritual practices. Probably the most striking difference between Western and Tibetan medicine that you will encounter is how Tibetan medicine looks at health and disease from an energetic perspective, as well from an anatomical and physiological one. It can be challenging for Westerners to understand and accept the notions of keeping these invisible subtle energies balanced and freely moving through invisible channels that are unquantifiable by scientific means.

It will become immediately clear that a Tibetan doctor treats the patient as a unique case and studies his condition globally. Rather than treating just the symptoms, a Tibetan doctor takes the patient's mental and emotional state, environment,

and lifestyle into consideration. Age, family life, and working conditions are also pertinent factors, and special emphasis is put on behavior and food choices. Treatment always includes modification of the patient's nutrition and habits, to facilitate their needs at that particular time.

The good news is that we can start to apply effective preventive medicine and begin our own healing by taking into consideration our state and personal choices. We can reap the benefits of eliminating, or at least reducing, our actions that have negative repercussions on our health, both physically and emotionally. For example, Tibetan medicine explains that our physiological needs are not fulfilled by eating a lot of raw and cold foods and drinks in winter, when outdoor temperatures drop—we must adapt accordingly to the seasons. We could benefit from paying more attention to what our bodies are trying to tell us and avoid excessive consumption of sour foods and alcohol.

Explanations found in Tibetan medicine are based on logic, and centuries of experience has proven it to be effective. Discovering and addressing the causes for disorders explain the success of Tibetan treatments, especially of chronic disease. We shall see here the root causes of disease and what kind of changes can be made in order to reap substantial benefits.

I would like to stress from the offset that Tibetan doctors would not suggest that patients stop the treatment given by a Western doctor. There is a full understanding and appreciation of the benefits of modern medicine. The two systems are complementary! It is clear that Western medicine is well-equipped to treat emergencies and acute illness with the support of modern technology, such as scanners and precise surgical methodology. However, Tibetan medicine is particularly effective in treating long-standing disorders, such as arthritis, liver disease, poor blood circulation, as well as digestive disorders. It can also enhance the immune system and reduce inflammation. Success has been obtained in patients with asthma, eczema and depression, to name a few. Marked

improvement can be obtained in patients with serious diseases, such as Parkinson and multiple sclerosis, and many cases of chronic disease. Although they cannot be cured, progression can be slowed down or eliminated; quality of life can be considerably improved.

It is not pleasant to be advised to do things differently in our lives, change our behavior and food choices, even give up aspects of our lives that we enjoy. Nevertheless, much of what follows is not that difficult to implement! The next step is to decide to apply what works for us. A Tibetan doctor would suggest that you take from their teachings what you find useful in order to have a healthy body and a happy state of mind.

I quote Jacques Haesaert: “Tibetan medicine is above all an art whose aim is to make men responsible for themselves, conscious of their potential for happiness, love and wisdom, and of the errors not to commit that which would lead them to suffering.”



Figure 1A. Jacques Haesaert teaching in France.



Figure 1B. Dr. Lobsang Shrestha with the author.

# A Short Introduction to Tibetan Medicine

Tibetan medicine is a profound Buddhist medical tradition and philosophy. The holistic system of Tibetan medicine has proven over centuries to be extremely effective and complementary to modern Western medicine, especially for chronic diseases. *Ancient Wisdom for Westerners* offers a clear and practical introduction to this ancient wisdom.

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“In this book, Marilyn Magazin skilfully conveys the main teachings of Tibetan Medicine and explains how these can enhance and complement existing western therapeutic frameworks. It’s a joy to see how she manages to keep her content accessible to westerners whilst also keeping to the spirit of this very precious ancient wisdom.”

**Lucy Jones**, medical herbalist and practitioner of Tibetan Medicine

“The beauty of Ancient Wisdom is time-tested, long lasting, and as new as your own discovery of it. I have known Dr. Magazin and her brilliance since grad school. Now, she shares with the world what we all desperately need to transform ourselves and our healthcare system. You will be elated as you read, absorb, and use the timeless wisdom she has made instantly available and omni-useful to you.”

**Mark Victor Hansen**, co-creator of *Chicken Soup for the Soul* and *ASK!* series

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**Marilyn Magazin** has worked in scientific and medical research for forty years. She has a Chemistry degree from the University of Kentucky and a doctoral degree in Molecular Biology from the University of Geneva. Thirty years ago, she encountered Tibetan medicine which she then studied with Jacques Haesaert, a French naturopath and Tibetan medical doctor, before studying for three more years with Dr Lobsang Shrestha.

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