



STATEMENT DN190

**A Summary Critique:  
Ageless Body, Timeless Mind: The Quantum Alternative to Growing Old  
Deepak Chopra (Harmony Books, 1993)**

**Perfect Health: The Complete Mind/Body Guide  
Deepak Chopra (Harmony Books, 1992)**

**by John Weldon**

Today's most influential and esteemed spokesperson for the \$30 billion-a-year business of alternative/New Age medicine is Deepak Chopra, M.D., president of the American Society of Ayurvedic Medicine. Dr. Chopra is an ardent promoter of a uniquely Hindu approach to medical care — ayurveda in general and what is termed “Maharishi Ayurveda” (or “Ayur-Veda”) in particular. The latter is a modified approach incorporating the practice of Transcendental Meditation (TM).

Appointed in 1992 to the National Institutes of Health ad hoc panel on alternative medicine, Chopra is the author of a half-dozen books on ayurveda and related subjects. His books — including *Creating Health*, *Return of the Rishi*, *Unconditional Life*, and *Quantum Healing* — have been translated into more than 25 languages.

Few would deny that Chopra's approach to health care has had substantial influence. *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*, published in 1993, has already sold close to a million hardcover copies. *People* magazine commented: “Few writers in the field of alternative medicine have so dominated the best-seller lists.”<sup>1</sup> Further, a number of medical centers around the country, such as the prestigious Sharp Health Care in San Diego, California, are now using his program.

Chopra begins *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind* by telling readers who desire true health that they must discard ten false assumptions concerning who they are and the world in which they live. Such “dangerous” assumptions include the following ideas:

There is an objective world independent of the observer, and our bodies are an aspect of this objective world....Materialism is primary, consciousness is secondary....Our perception of the world is automatic and gives us an accurate picture of how things really are....Time exists as an absolute and we are captives of that absolute. No one escapes the ravages of time. Suffering is necessary — it is part of reality. We are inevitable victims of sickness, aging, and death (1:4).

He proceeds to argue that such ideas are part of the passing “old paradigm” and are inaccurate reflections of true reality. In fact, he offers the incredible explanation that such ideas “are *inventions* of the human mind...” (1:5, emphasis added). Supposedly, the only reason that we accept anything as objectively or phenomenologically real is because of the “tyranny of the senses” (1:7).

What is Chopra's solution to our supposedly self-generated sicknesses? He suggests that we recreate our reality, including a “physiology of immortality.” According to Chopra, our consciousness is divine and literally creates our bodies and our reality; further, the mind and body “are inseparably one.” Therefore, changing our consciousness automatically changes our reality.

Chopra is correct when he describes his antirealist ideas as “vast assumptions.” He is on far less secure ground when he calls them “the making of a new reality.” And he is arguing pure pseudoscience when he claims such assumptions “are grounded in the discovery of quantum physics made almost a hundred years ago” (1:7). Still, such ideas form the infrastructure of his system of health care.

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Chopra's ayurveda is based upon what he terms "three irreducible physiological principles" called doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha). Supposedly these govern and regulate the different functions of mind and body.<sup>2</sup> Everyone is endowed with these doshas at birth, although in various proportions. The particular proportion determines the body type assigned to each individual. In classical Hinduism there are ten possible types derived from various combinations of the doshas. The three major doshas are divided into subdoshas, each with a different location and function throughout the body. "Imbalance in the doshas and subdoshas disrupts normal function and is responsible for various disorders."<sup>3</sup>

Supposedly, the "enlightened" Western physician is able to correlate the ancient magical methods of ayurvedic diagnosis with the disease classification of modern scientific medicine. Yet in his article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* Chopra reveals that ayurveda does *not* rely on the basic assumptions of Western medicine, but is actually hostile to them:

In the ayurvedic framework, the body is viewed...as a physical expression of...[an] underlying *abstract field of intelligence*. Ayurvedic practitioners identify this underlying field as consciousness.... Therefore, ayurvedic practitioners use mental techniques for the treatment of diseases.... Therapy in Ayur-Veda is prescribed on the basis of imbalances in the doshas and psychophysiological type rather than by disease entity as in allopathic medicine (emphasis in original).<sup>4</sup>

Further, ayurvedic practitioners can supposedly detect even serious disease, although there are "no...clinical signs."<sup>5</sup> In other words we are not dealing with rational Western medicine at all. Rather, the detection of alleged subclinical disease is based on Hindu metaphysics/anatomy wherein all disease is ultimately rooted in "faulty" consciousness, manifested through the doshas.

As Chopra observes, "Doshas are invisible....Lying as they do in the gap between mind and body, they resemble nothing that exists in our Western scientific framework. Vata, Pitta, Kapha only come into clear focus once you begin to view yourself from an Ayurvedic perspective" (2:47).

Chopra associates the subclinical medicine of ayurveda with what he terms the "quantum mechanical body." This "body" is ultimately a manifestation of divine consciousness which has infinite power to form and control the body as it wishes (2:117).

But all this is nonsense. It is ludicrous for a trained medical doctor to even assume there is such a thing as a "quantum mechanical body," let alone to base an entire system of health care upon it.

To better understand Chopra's perspective on disease and treatment, one must realize how extensively he is dealing with the practice of an intangible, invisible medicine. Consider his six stages in the disease process: (1) The disease process begins with the abnormal buildup of one or more doshas; (2) The overaccumulation of excess dosha reaches the point where it begins to spread outside normal boundaries; (3) The dosha moves throughout the body; (4) The dosha settles where it does not belong; (5) "physical symptoms arise at the point where the dosha has localized"; (6) a full-blown disease erupts (2:92).

Notice that the first four stages of the disease process deal in the realm of the invisible. "At this point, a Western doctor would not yet have a diagnosis, because no textbook disorder is present, but it is certain from the ayurvedic standpoint that the body is no longer perfectly healthy" (2:92). Because "the body is nothing other than the projection of our own consciousness,"<sup>6</sup> an "unhealthy" or "unenlightened" consciousness will *necessarily* cause preclinical disease that can be "detected" only by ayurveda. Therefore it is not surprising that consciousness, which supposedly regulates this invisible process, is the true "healer."

Because the body is ultimately a creation of one's divine mind, proper manipulation of consciousness can allegedly control body functions, even down to the "quantum" level — and up through all levels of physical reality. Thus, "the real medicine our bodies need is medicine for awareness" (2:109). Further, "in the new paradigm, control of life belongs to awareness" (1:36) because "the biochemistry of the body is a product of awareness...." Thus "the great need [is] to use our awareness to create the bodies we really want....The body is like a manifest dream....There is no biochemistry outside awareness...Once you accept that fact, the whole illusion of being victimized by a mindless, randomly degenerating body falls away" (1:22 -24).

Chopra believes proper "awareness" — a "higher" state of consciousness and a world view predicated on his brand of Hinduism — is the key to prevention of disease, perfect health, and even immortality. Why? Because consciousness, being divine, has magical power to regulate, control, and even create physical matter: "The doshas are like a switching station where thoughts turn into matter....The only way truly to penetrate this realm is subjectively, from inside the quantum mechanical body. Here is where the trick of turning mind into matter is actually being managed" (2:107-108).

Do you want an entirely new body, free of all disease and aging? Chopra says you can create one with your own consciousness. Thus, he claims that his system of ayurveda far surpasses the capacity of "unenlightened" modern medicine whose science is,

unfortunately, based solely at the “gross” or material level. For example: “The interaction of the mind and the immune system is so fluent that doctors cannot actually pinpoint the critical moment when negative thoughts compromise the body’s white cells. In Maharishi Ayurveda, we are able to be much more precise” (2:91)!

Consider Dr. Chopra’s more “enlightened” advice to a patient with chronic myelogenous leukemia, a fatal cancer. In terms reflective of the philosophy of Transcendental Meditation he explains to the patient: “What we want is to pull your awareness back to a healthier level, to a place where this disease is not so threatening. Ultimately, we would like you to find the place where it does not even exist” (2:111).

This fits well with the *advaita* Hindu view that this world and the things that occur in it, such as disease and death, are not ultimately real — they are merely illusory manifestations of “imperfections” in consciousness. The doctor thus advises his patient, “If you can pierce the *mask* of disease and contact your inner self, even for a few minutes a day [via TM], you will make tremendous strides toward a cure, I promised” (2:112, emphasis added).

Consider also Chopra’s discussion of the heart attack. He explains that at the “quantum mechanical level” heart attacks can be produced solely by “a deep, smoldering dissatisfaction lodged in the mind” (2:109). Thus, as to the true cause of heart attacks, “loss of [divine] awareness among the heart cells is primary” (1:37). Presumably this is because “molecules can make decisions.... [Ultimately] we are choosing our own diseases” simply because we live with so many false ideas about reality (2:11).

Even though not a shred of scientific evidence exists to substantiate Chopra’s ideas, he proceeds to promise that treatment based upon the ayurvedic premise of the supremacy of consciousness can actually prevent illness, disease, and aging. Why? Because these conditions are merely false beliefs “that do not match reality” (1:59).

This, of course, is also the philosophy of TM. In this popular form of Hindu religion, “unity consciousness” is a state where the experiencer perceives himself (or herself) to be one essence and nature with the highest reality — the Hindu God Brahman. The true perceiver or “seer” of his own deity realizes that all phenomenal appearances, including disease and death, are mere illusions from which he must deliver himself by his own consciousness. Chopra comments:

In unity consciousness, the world can be explained as a flow of Spirit, which is awareness. Our whole goal is to establish a relationship with Self as Spirit [i.e., to realize we are God]. To the extent that we create this intimacy, the experience of ageless body and timeless mind is realized. We are not victims of aging, sickness, and death. These are part of the scenery, not the seer, who is immune to any form of change (1:35-36).

Chopra proceeds from the assumption that death is an illusion to assure us that the experience of physical death is not necessary, at least as commonly perceived: “To break free of the grip of death, you need to see that it is based on a very selective view of reality that was conditioned into you before you had a conscious choice....Your belief in death as an extinction doomed your body to decay, age and die...” (1:304).

It is safe to predict that a hundred years from now — or a thousand — neither Chopra nor other followers of TM will have achieved their state of “ageless body, timeless mind.” What they will have reaped are things that perhaps they never expected when they first signed up for the program.

Do Western practitioners of Maharishi Ayurveda understand, for example, that they are doing exercises that traditionally offered respect and even worship to the Hindu sun god (2:204, 268-301)? In traditional and modern Hinduism, *Surya Namascara* is a salute to *Surya*, the Hindu sun god who even today is invoked by all Hindus....<sup>7</sup>

Do they understand that Chopra’s “neuro-muscular integration” and “balanced breathing” are yoga postures and mystical breathing exercises? These also are religious practices, and physically and spiritually hazardous as well.<sup>8</sup>

Would Chopra’s patients continue with Maharishi Ayurveda if they knew that the real purpose behind the practice is to contact the essence of the Hindu God Brahman and to experientially recreate oneself as God through occult practice (1:35-37)?

One also wonders if patients realize they may be asked to pay thousands of dollars to acquire occult amulets, or to contact and solicit the help of Hindu gods — traditionally held to be the true source of ayurveda.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, the books’ readers should ask themselves, What did this kind of philosophy and practice do for the occult sages of India, or Indian culture itself? It is difficult to deny that the appalling social conditions endemic to India — including one of the overall

worst standards of health in the modern world — are to a significant degree the result of its own paganism. In the end, it is to such paganism that Dr. Chopra would have us devote our bodies and souls.

— John Weldon

1Craig Bromberg, “Doc of Ages,” *People*, 15 November 1993, 170.

2Deepak Chopra et.al.. “Maharishi Ayur-Veda: Modern Insights into Ancient Medicine,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, May 22-29, 1991, 2633.

3*Ibid.*

4*Ibid.*, 2364, 2367.

5*Ibid.*, 2364.

6*The Oprah Winfrey Show*, 7 December 1993.

7q.v. “Surya,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol.9, Micropaedia.

8See, e.g., John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Thieves of Innocence* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993), 134-37.

9See Andrew Skonick, “Letters,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2 October 1991, 1749.