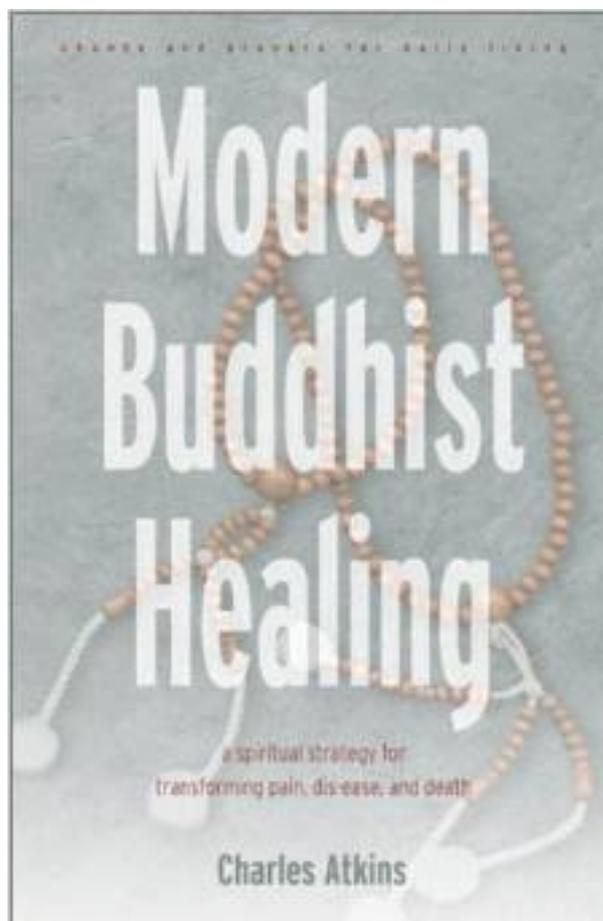


Modern Buddhist Healing – a spiritual strategy for transforming pain, dis-ease and death
Charles Atkins



Charles Atkins, *“Modern Buddhist Healing – a spiritual strategy for transforming pain, dis-ease and death”*
Nicholas-Hays Inc, York Beach, ME
Published in 2002, ISBN 0-89254-062-1
Genre: Buddhism, Body-mind healing

Charles Atkins’s *“Modern Buddhist Healing”* shows that “with hope, faith, and prayer, nothing is impossible”. Atkins was inspired to share with others the healing techniques he had experienced, having survived an affliction of Hodgkin’s disease, a cancer that affects the lymph nodes, and undergone “the ravages of chemo- and radiation therapy”.

One cannot help but feel compassion for Atkins and all those afflicted by cancer when reading his account of his traumatic experience. Finishing the book one can only feel a sense of appreciative joy... rejoicing in the remission and eventual victory Atkins achieved over what he labeled as the “inner coward”. Atkins notes that, in retrospect,

he saw clearly “that the inner coward has many manifestations. It takes the form of self-doubt, guilt, self-pity, remorse, escapism, and self-destructive urges.” He recognizes it as “nothing more than the fundamental darkness that is inherent in human life.”

The core of Buddhist healing according to Charles Atkins is the “empowerment of the human spirit” and is experiential. Charles Atkins however cautions and alerts the reader that “the foremost step” before even considering Buddhist healing is to “get the best medical treatment available”.

Atkins’s inclination toward Buddhism and deep spiritual faith is evident throughout his book as well as his desire to share his experience in overcoming cancer. He notes that even merging Western and Eastern approaches to cures will not cure the “fundamental cause that produce the illness in the first place”. The only cure is found in the “realm of faith, prayer, consciousness, and *karma* (action). Buddha taught that negative karma can and does manifest as illness of the body, mind, and spirit”.

Atkins found his inspiration from the Japanese Buddhist master, Sensei Nichiren Daishonin (1222-1282). Atkins’s technique is based on the “healing teachings... as laid out in the Lotus Sutra” and “explains how the mantra ‘*Nam-myoho-rence-kyo*’ can be used to ‘undo’ karma that has damaged our health.”

Atkins discovered that the “Lotus Sutra contains powerful medicine for the illness of all people.” That ‘medicine’ is the mantra ‘*Nam-myoho-rence-kyo*’. “Changing *karma* in the ‘*alaya-vijnana*’ is a function of *Nam-myoho-rence-kyo* and is the means by which even diseases such as advanced cancer can possibly be overcome.” *Alaya-vijnana*, is the eighth of the “nine levels of consciousness associated with all life” identified in Mahayana Buddhism. It is identified with Carl Jung’s “the collective unconscious”. It has been interpreted as “limitless storehouse of perceptions, conceptions, words, and actions that we experience or create in life”. The eighth and ninth levels of consciousness are “fused with the universe at death to be reborn”. The ninth level of consciousness being the *amala-vijnana* or “cosmic consciousness” or “true entity of life, fundamentally pure, and impervious to time, space, suffering, or death”.

Atkins introduces us to the “principle of the oneness of body and mind, ‘*shiki-shin funi*’, one of the most compelling concepts in Nichiren’s Buddhist healing. More accurately, ‘*shiki-shin funi*’ is the essential oneness of the material and spiritual.”

I would not do justice to Atkins’ explanation of the efficacy of ‘*shiki-shin*

funi’ if I do not quote him verbatim: “When the mind is disturbed, there is a corresponding depression in the immune system, whereas faith, happiness, and encouragement seem to bolster the immune system. The integrating force of the oneness of body and mind is the life-dynamic of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*. This knowledge and power is especially valuable for children stricken by cancer and debilitating disease, as well as for their parents, because chanting offers tremendous hope for the innocent and it is easy for them to master.”

Atkins in “*Modern Buddhist Healing*” takes great pains to explain the mantra, *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, that he advocates as the “secret” to healing. “It expresses the true entity of life that allows each individual to directly tap his or her enlightened nature. Only its invocation can reveal its deepest meaning, but the literal meaning of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* is: devotion, the fusion of one’s life with the universal (*Nam*); the entity of the universe and its phenomenal manifestations is the Mystic Law (*myoho*); the simultaneity of cause and effect (represented in the lotus, *renge*, which is the only known flower to bear seeds and blossom at the same time); and all phenomena and activities in life (*kyo*, Buddha’s teaching).”

Atkins descriptive skill is best revealed when he shares his personal experience including a very detailed description of the ‘nimita’ he experienced during meditation. Here are excerpts: “I was so enraptured by the vision that I was drawn into the light, completely immersed in pulsing energy.... I saw huge streamers of vivid red and purple gently rippling to a peaceful wind.... They were visions of immeasurable purity.”

We can experience the dire predicament Atkins and his immediate family was in from his description of cancer as “a ravenous monster that backs you up against death’s door. ... Within a few months, we were on the verge of bankruptcy, and the Inland Revenue was threatening us with seizure of what little assets we had. ... We were under siege. ... Adding to our obstacles, my father-in-law suffered what was first thought to be a heart attack and was hospitalized. ... It became clear to us that we couldn’t escape our karma, and it was closing in on us daily. We had no choice but to continue chanting ‘*Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*’, no matter how badly we felt.”

“With each passing day, I was challenged with the opportunity of moving forward or giving in to defeat. I looked for inspiration and strength in my faith. I studied and chanted as much as my strength and will power would allow me.”.... “With the excellence of medical science and my visualization, anything was possible. Even in the face of death, which could happen at any moment, I felt confident in my faith and my

future afterlife.”

Atkins’ story is all about faith and a commitment to persevere to overcome “a ravenous monster”.

Here are excerpts of other reviews of Atkins’ *“Modern Buddhist Healing”*:

S Rouvray: “It is an honest, clear account of how anyone can change their lives and free themselves from disease.”

Robert W Conroy (South Elgin, Illinois United States): “No matter what your religious upbringing is, this book is for anyone seeking a spiritual path in the modern world.”

JMD (Chicago, IL USA): “This book is exactly what many people are seeking right now. Atkins teaches clearly how to use our own potential for healing.”