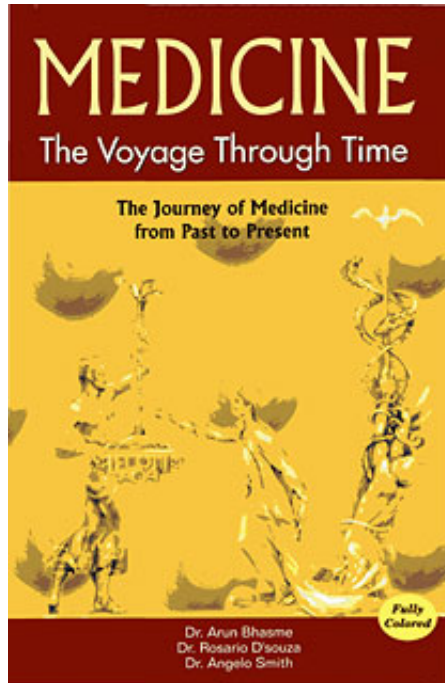


# Bhasme /D'souza/Smith Medicine -The Voyage Through Time

Reading excerpt

[Medicine -The Voyage Through Time](#)  
of [Bhasme /D'souza/Smith](#)



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# THE DAWN OF MEDICINE



Medicine is the branch of health science and the sector of public life concerned with maintaining or restoring human health through the treatment of disease and injury. It is both an area of knowledge - a science of body systems, their diseases and treatment - and the applied practice of that knowledge.

Systems of medical and health care practices have existed inside human societies since the beginning of recorded history. These systems have developed in various ways across different cultures and regions. Medicine, as understood in the modern period, has historically been

considered to be the mainstream tradition which developed in the western world since the early modern age.

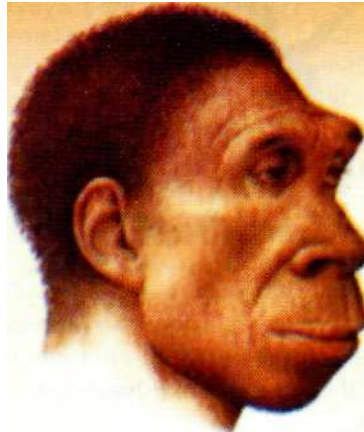
Many other traditions of medicine and health care are still widely practiced throughout the world; most of these are still considered to be separate and distinct from Western medicine, which is also called Biomedicine or the Hippocratic tradition. The most highly developed systems of medicine outside the Western system are traditional Chinese medicine and the Ayurvedic traditions of India and Sri Lanka.

All human societies have medical beliefs that provide explanations for, and responses to, birth, death, and disease.

Throughout the world, illness has often been attributed to witchcraft, demons, adverse astral influence, or the will of the gods, ideas that retain some power, with faith healing and shrines still common, although the rise of scientific medicine in the past two centuries has altered or replaced many historic health practices.

## **PREHISTORIC MEDICINE**

**8000 - 5000 BC**



Primitive Medicine is timeless. It is as old as the Paleolithic cave-dwellers. It is as new as today. Early evidences of its practice can be traced back 10,000 years. Yet it is being practiced in some part of the

world at this very hour in certain remote areas of Africa, Asia, and South America, Australia, the islands of the Pacific; or among some of the Indian tribes and Eskimos in North America. The pace of advancement of medicine from its beginnings has not been even. In some societies living in today's world, some cultures have still remained at near stone age levels.

It is difficult to imagine anything other than modern medical treatments; but for thousands of years humans have become ill and for the same amount of time people have tried to cure them. Our ideas about medicines in prehistoric times come from archaeologists who have excavated and explored ancient sites. Their findings reveal a very different world to the one we experience today.

Death, disease and incapacity have dogged the footsteps of every living being since their appearance on the earth. Naturally, the problem of disease and how to get rid of them was and has been one of the earliest preoccupations of man. But, his knowledge of nature was quite inadequate and was always at its mercy. The various phenomenon like lightning, storms, earthquakes, eclipses, etc. left him wonder struck. The waxing and the waning of the moon, high tides and low tides - all this he could not explain except through fanciful theories. Man was always conscious of his own incompleteness.

**Primitive medicine was born in sympathy and out of necessity to help those in sorrow, need and sickness.** The 1st doctor was the first man and the first nurse was the first woman. The prehistoric man, motivated by feelings of sympathy and kindness, was always at the behest of his kindred, trying to provide relief, in times of sickness and suffering. The first lesson of primitive man was from injuries, accidents and bites.

## CAUSE OF DISEASE

Man was always conscious of his own incompleteness. Since he had limited knowledge, prehistoric man attributed disease, all human suffering and calamities to the wrath of Gods, invasion of the body by evil spirits, or to the influence of stars and planets. This concept came to be known as **THE SUPERNATURAL THEORY OF DISEASE.**

Cave paintings and symbolic artifacts found by archaeologists suggest the earliest humans believed in spirits and supernatural forces. The animals, the stars, the land in which they lived and dead

ancestors all inhabited a spirit world that was connected to their everyday life. Members of primitive society did not distinguish between medicine, magic and religion.

## TREATMENT

All treatments were nothing more than methods of appeasement. They included:

- Pleasing the Gods by means of prayers or rituals and sacrifices.
- Driving out of the evil spirits by witch craft and other crude means.
- Protection against the influence of evil spirits by the use of charms and amulets.
- Magical Rituals.
- Use of some knowledge of herbs as cures e.g. Chickweed leaves to treat open sores and violets as a cough medicine.
- Aborigines took care to bury their cast off hair, nails and their excrement because they believed this would warn off the evil spirits.

Medicine took the form of magic and became the prerogative of priests. Special individuals, like Shaman, were thought to be able to contact the spirit world and seek their guidance when they entered mysterious trances. These men and women would call upon the spirits to bring good hunting or heal the sick and were possibly the first doctors.

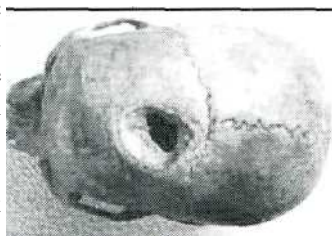


A CAVE PAINTING—SHOWS THE BELIEF OF PRIMITIVE MAN IN SUPERNATURAL FORCES

Spirit healers would perform ceremonies and cast spells to treat the sick. We also believe that they dispensed the first medicines. Drinking the blood of a wild animal killed in the hunt would give hunters special powers or eating special plants known only to the Shaman could treat sickness. It is possible that these treatments would sometimes have a beneficial effect and it is thought that drugs -like Digitalis and Morphine were first discovered in this way.

## STATE OF ANATOMY AND SURGERY

They had limited knowledge of basic anatomy gained from hunting. One form of primitive surgery seems quite shocking. Ancient skulls have been found with a hole bored into them. This appears to have been a deliberate operation and carried out whilst the person was still alive. We can only speculate as to the reason for this operation, called trepanning, but it may have been to allow the evil spirits to leave a sick person - to provide a hole for escape.



TREPANNING—A FORM OF  
PRIMITIVE SURGERY

It was used in the treatment of epilepsy, infantile convulsions and headache which were caused by confined demons. One method may be cutting and scraping away at the bone of the skull with a sharp flint, until a hole is virtually rubbed away.

Another may be making a circle of small holes with a flint drill and then cutting between them. Skulls show that the wounds healed and bone grew back so amazingly it appears that patients often survived this radical brain surgery. Trephined skulls have been found in Western Europe, including England, North Africa, Asia, the East Indies, New Zealand, and the Americas from Alaska in the north down through the continent to Peru in the south. They could also set simple breaks in bones.

Thus we see that medicine in prehistoric times is nothing but a combination of superstition, religion, magic and witchcraft.