

Michael Harner echoed Czaplicka's contention about shamanistic powers being endowed by virtue of nearly dying. Harner wrote, "In aboriginal Siberia, a death/rebirth experience was often a major source of shamanistic knowledge" (1980, p. xii).

Alfred Kroeber claimed that for most of the former Californian Native American tribes the prospective shaman commonly became sick in order to obtain shamanistic powers. The future medicine-man "lies down; his relatives are afraid he will die, and call a shaman for treatment" (1952, p. 311).

Rogers wrote that a prospective shaman of the Yurak or Samoyed of eastern Asia will remain unconscious for days, "apparently dead, and may be nearly buried" (1982, p. 16). During the time he is unconscious, he is thought to have an out-of-body experience to train him as a shaman.

Finally, in *Closer to the Light*, Melvin Morse and Paul Perry wrote that Black Elk "had a near-fatal illness at age nine that put him in touch with the Light" (1990, p. 124). Apparently, during his near-fatal illness, Black Elk saw, among other things, deceased relatives and a bright light surrounding the earth. Morse and Perry also stated that the Indian guru Paramahansa Yogananda had a near-death experience (NDE) at age 8. A bright light encompassed Yogananda's body, which seemed to cure him of his illness, and enabled him to illuminate others later in his life.

From the above descriptions, it would seem that some shamans were near-death experiencers first. For some, their NDE bestowed them with shamanistic powers, whether or not they wanted such powers.

Kenneth Ring, while not directly addressing the issue of shamanism, alluded to healing powers developing subsequent to an NDE in *Heading Toward Omega* (1984). Ring wrote that "the NDE may establish a potential for some individuals to become healers, but whether that potential is activated may depend largely on events subsequent to the NDE itself" (1984, p. 332).

Margot Grey supported Ring's supposition; in her opinion, "a number of NDErs find that they spontaneously develop the ability to heal" (1985, p. 100). She described the case of a man who is now a practicing healer subsequent to his NDE, who claims to have helped thousands of persons.

In our technological society that accredits medical providers based on the Western medical model, perhaps the healing powers of NDErs lie dormant or go unacknowledged, or are suppressed by accusations of charlatanism. By contrast, in some non-Western cultures the healing

or shamanistic powers are not only nurtured and encouraged, but, in some cases, demanded of people who have nearly died.

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