

Rare and Precious Gifts

Books find their way into the right hands, touching hearts and minds

By VATSALA SPERLING, MS, PhD, PDHom, RSHom, CCH

BIRTHDAY GIFTS COME IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES. IN THE EARLY 1970S, MY BROTHER GAVE ME A SET of books by Paul Brunton about Ramana Maharishi, a well-known sage from India.



“Wow, homeopathy has been around... since before my grandparents were born...”

Back then, I was just beginning to sink my teeth into the English language with the help of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Every evening, my brother would gather our family together after dinner and read to us from Brunton’s books. He would explain nuances of phrasing, grammar, and spelling, and elaborate on the exquisite core contents of these spiritually charged books. In our modern times of a thousand TV channels, I have yet to experience evenings more entertaining than those from my zero-electronics childhood in India. I remember noticing that the volumes were published by Weiser Books and asking my brother, “What does ‘publish’ mean?” “Publishing is an endeavor that turns the dreams of authors into the physical reality of books and places these books into the hands of the readers,” my brother replied.

Synchronicity

Years later, I learned that my husband, Ehud Sperling, worked in the 1970s as a clerk and salesman in the New York antiquarian book store of this very same publisher, Donald Weiser. “Who knows?” Ehud told me, “I might have even handled the very books your brother was reading to you. We used to send parcels to overseas readers all the time.” Eventually, Ehud created his own book publishing company, Inner Traditions, and through him I came to enjoy the company of his good friend Donald Weiser.

Fast forward to 2013. Donald Weiser, now in his late eighties, still keenly involved with books old and new, asked me one day, “Would you like me to send you some old homeopathy books?”

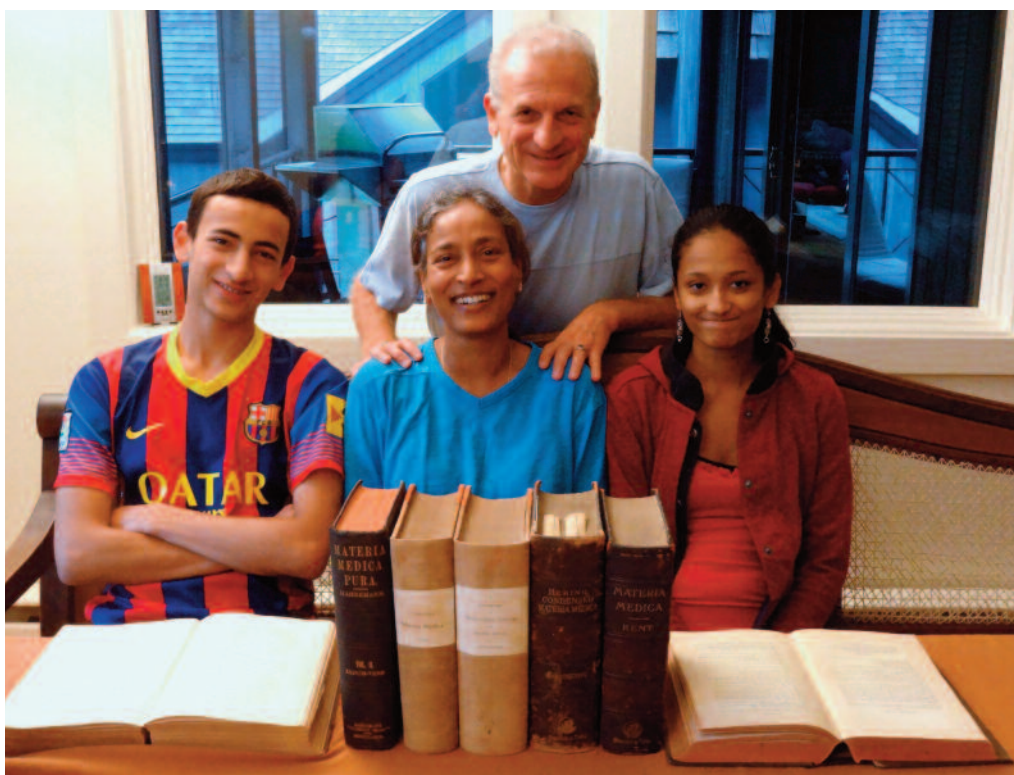
As a homeopath, I have learned to welcome homeopathy books with an open heart, believing that each book can be a source for inspiration. “Sure. I would love that,” I answered, hardly knowing what might ensue.

Special moments

When the parcel arrived at Ehud’s office, his assistant called me with the breathless excitement of a kid in a candy store. “Your books are here! They are *old!*”

Old indeed! Here is what the treasure chest contained:

1. *Condensed Materia Medica* by C. Hering, 2nd edition, Boericke and Tafel, NY, 1879, 883 pages
2. *Hering’s Condensed Materia Medica*, 4th edition, Boericke and Tafel, PA, 1894, 968 pages



Vatsala, Ehud, their son Mahar, and niece Rina celebrating the arrival of antiquarian homeopathy books, a gift from their friend Donald Weiser.



3. *Materia Medica Pura*, vol. I, by Samuel Hahnemann, Hahnemann Publishing Society, UK, 1880, 718 pages
4. *Materia Medica Pura*, vol. II, by Samuel Hahnemann, Hahnemann Publishing Society, UK, 1881, 709 pages
5. *A Repertory of Hering's Guiding Symptoms of Our Materia Medica*, by Calvin B. Knerr, F.A. Davis and Co., PA, 1896, 1232 pages
6. *New Warren's Household Physician, Enlarged and Revised, Being a Brief Description in Plain Language of All the Diseases of Men, Women and Children*, Boston, A.I. Bradley and Co., 1901, 986 pages
7. *Materia Medica* by James Tyler Kent, Boericke and Tafel, PA, 1905, 965 pages.

The evening Ehud brought the books home was full of special moments. Our son Mahar held one in his hands very gently, and while turning its pages, said reverently: "Wow, homeopathy has been around for over a hundred years, or more ... since before my grandparents were born..."

These are huge, serious-looking academic books bound in cloth or dark leather and printed in black. *New Warren's Household Physician* has color pictures that are hand drawn. Here and there, the

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prior owners of the books have scribbled notes in ink and cursive letters.

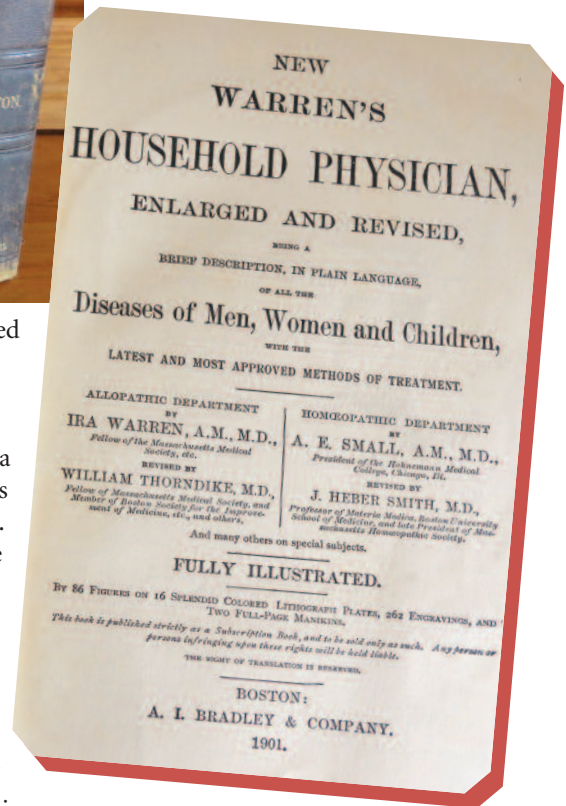
Standing the test of time

These venerable books now occupy a place of honor in my study, among scores of volumes by contemporary authors. We homeopaths do know that ever since Samuel Hahnemann (1755–1843) developed homeopathy, it has been in use and has spread to the whole world. But turning the yellowing pages of these over-a-century-old books proves this knowledge like nothing else does. My favorite is *New Warren's Household Physician* in which chapters on allopathic and homeopathic approaches indicate that there was a time when these two disciplines existed side by side, complementing and supporting each other for the benefit of the patients. What a golden time that must have been!

Though I reach for contemporary volumes for my day-to-day reading simply because they're less fragile, I am filled with a deep sense of awe every time I see the century-old books in my study. They have endured and, luckily for us, homeopathy has endured. And now when my son receives homeopathic remedies, he is more respectful of what he is being given, knowing in his heart that homeopathy is not some passing breeze or the fashionable health fad of the moment, here today, gone tomorrow. It is an art and a science that has stood the test of time and is getting stronger with age.

In humble gratitude

As for me, I am simply astounded as to how these books from Donald Weiser have found their way into my hands, first in the 1970s when I was just a kid learning to read English, and now in 2013, when I am



a wife, mother, and homeopath. To say that a book somehow always finds its reader is to say the very least about the power of books and their inherent ability to touch hearts and minds while making their way in this world.

Hopefully, these books will live many more hundreds of years and keep finding hands that will hold them with love, awe, and a sense of wonder, just as my son did, and as I find myself doing from time to time. And for this I am full of gratitude to Donald Weiser and his wife Yvonne, who saw fit to give me these precious books as a gift.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vatsala Sperling MS, PhD, PDHom, RSHom, CCH, was Chief of Clinical Microbiology services in a children's hospital in Chennai, India. Growing up in India, she fondly remembers the sweet taste of homeopathic remedies from her local homeopathic doctors. Enrolling in Misha Norland's School of Homeopathy in 2004, she has ever since been immersed in homeopathy. A published author of eight books (InnerTraditions.com) and several essays, she practices classical homeopathy in Vermont, where she lives with her family. www.Rochesterhomeopathy.com