

# ***Cannabis*** ***and*** ***Spirituality***

An Explorer's Guide to  
an Ancient Plant Spirit Ally



*Edited by Stephen Gray*



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# Foreword

Julie A. Holland, M.D.

IT IS MY HONOR to be writing the foreword for this much-needed book on cannabis and spirituality. I must admit, I'm thrilled that so much attention has been paid lately to the therapeutic effects of medicinal cannabis, whether to kill cancer cells or treat post-traumatic stress disorder. And I'm encouraged by the inroads made by drug policy reform toward ending mass incarceration and implementing harm-reduction strategies. It's all great progress and we should be proud. But there's been a dearth of discussion about all that cannabis can do for us spiritually: to feed our souls, to transcend and connect on a higher plane.

Until now.

Author, editor, entheogen-related event organizer, and workshop leader Stephen Gray has compiled a robust roster of writers who will introduce you to the spiritual use of cannabis across cultures and eras, worldwide. From the sadhus of India to the Rastafarians of Jamaica, the ritual use of this ancient plant is a keystone in the archway of enlightenment for many indigenous tribes and collectives.

Coevolving on this Earth with us for millennia, cannabis is one of

our planet's most magical gifts, a medicine for body and soul. It's no wonder that so many religions have chosen to make it central to their dogma. Like music or math, it's a universal language.

These days, in America, I'm afraid that materialism is our dogma. We amass; we hoard; we fawn over our possessions to prevent fear, to feel like we belong. Capitalism fuels the fire, enabling our acquiring, stoking the fires of fearmongering that necessitate the soothing. We buy, spend, and work to support it all. There are many among us who are addicted to greed, to power, to newer, to more. For some, it is never enough.

And this is where pot comes in—it's a way to opt out, temporarily, of the rat race. Cannabis can unlock us from our habitual way of doing things, and, more importantly, of thinking about things. It pulls us out of our forward-leaning vector, encouraging us to hang back, wait a bit, and see how things feel before rushing into anything. It puts us in touch with our deepest longings and our truest feelings. It enables contemplation and reflection.

Planting a seedling and waiting for it to grow teaches one to live in Earth time, not clock time. Gardening is therapeutic for body and mind. Tending to this plant can quell not only nausea and pain, but the emptiness, the disconnection that is one of the many symptoms plaguing our populace. It is "doing the Lord's work," so to speak. We've got to get ourselves back to the garden. "Grow and give" is the ultimate anticapitalist, subversive act. This is shareware in its finest hour. There is no patenting a flower.

How can one plant facilitate group work, yoga, shamanism, and meditation? How can it spark creativity, enable artistic expression, and allow people to connect with their deepest truths? The burgeoning flower of this female plant unlocks the yin, the receptive energy in us all. It can help us to feel connected to nature, to each other, and, importantly, to ourselves. Open your heart and your mind and take your time. Take it all in. Wonder in the glory of nature, of a cleansing breath, of a good stretch. This is just what we need to balance out the excess of yang

energy in our world today (bombs and bullets, rape, corporate greed—penetrating energies all).

How can we be locking people up for possessing the keys to the kingdom? For distributing a balm that is good for what ails us? Even in this book, six of the seventeen contributors have spent time in prison, either for their use of cannabis or their activism on its behalf. Political prisoners in our culture war, they know that cognitive liberty and religious freedoms are worth fighting for. And we will fight to open hearts and minds with empathy, and with love.

The writers Joan Bello and Jeremy Wolff have taught me that the words *health* and *holy* derive from the concept of being whole. I know as a physician, partner, and mother that balance and homeostasis are what keep us healthy. It is what keeps our relationships thriving. I also know that our salvation and that of the planet rests in our ability to feel connected—to each other, to ourselves, to nature, and to the universal latticework of energy and light that binds us to this plane.

Holy, whole, and healthy—these are lofty goals for us all. *Happy* is another word with this same origin. And I am happy to be introducing this important book to you. Enjoy it in good health.

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