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Health - Opening Hearts and Minds

Hunter House Tomes Tackle Body and Spirit

By Noelle Robbins



Somebody looked into my eyes, or my heart, early on—maybe even between conception and birth— and said, in effect, remember you have a soul.”With these words, Kiran Rana eloquently describes the philosophy that sparks the life force for Hunter House Publishers.

For 15 years, here in Alameda, Rana and his staff have dedicated themselves to the belief that health and healing represent a delicate balance between what conventional or Western medicine can provide, and the crucial role of personal responsibility and the nurture of nature. The groundbreaking books of Hunter House Publishers are a devoted testament to this world view.

The seeds for Hunter House were planted in Rana’s homeland of India, nourished by his Sufi tradition, germinated in Europe and burst into bloom on American soil with the publication of *Once A Month*, by Katharina Dalton, M.D. in 1978. *Once A Month* was the first book available in the United States that identified and explained what for many women is a cyclical challenge—premenstrual syndrome, or PMS.

With its flaming red and purple book jacket, *Once A Month* initially evoked the extreme anger of feminists at that time who felt the book supplied all the ammunition the male establishment needed to claim women were not quite themselves each month.

“But then,” according to Rana, “A lot of women said, ‘No, this is real.’ And suddenly, within two years, there were 60, 70, 80 PMS groups all over the country and this was one of the books they all bought.” Women used the book to help raise the awareness of medical practitioners.

“Women used to take the book and walk into their doctors and say, ‘You know, this is real.’ Women could go and talk about it and not be treated as though they were crazy,” he says.

Following the positive reception Hunter House established roots in California. Rana ultimately chose Alameda and a homey office space above the Pop Inn on Park Street as the ideal location to grow Hunter House. Most of Hunter House’s international staff are delighted to call Alameda home.

Although women’s health books were, and continue to be, a key focus for Hunter House, men

certainly have not been ignored. “Men are definitely interested in sex,” Rana says. “Sexuality is a very important part of human health and mental health and having a natural approach towards it is part of our mission.” Jeanne Brondino, Rana’s partner in life, and acquisitions editor for Hunter House, adds, “Most of our health books have a chapter on sex.”

One of Hunter House Publishers’ best sellers is *Sexual Pleasure* by noted sex therapist and surrogate partner, Barbara Keesling, who brings “compassion and matter-of-factness” to her approach. Other intriguing Hunter House titles in this genre include *The Pocket Book of Sex & Chocolate* and *The Hot Guide to Safer Sex*. Publications designed to open hearts and minds about children’s issues are also a priority for Hunter House. In addition, Hunter House is a major publisher of books focused on the reduction of violence, whether it be on the playground, or in the home and dating environment.

The Hunter House’s vision—to empower readers facing emotional and physical health challenges to find a genuine comfort level with their bodies and spirits—has resonated with librarians across the country and in 1994 the publishing company garnered recognition as the Library Distributors’ Small Press Publisher of the Year.

Rana sums up his philosophy this way: “The books that Hunter House publishes try to present balanced comprehensive views on health issues and options. One-to-one relationships of guidance and nurturing of the whole person are a central part of the Sufi tradition.” That tradition continues to flower for Hunter House in Alameda.