

THE Hindu Message

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A Weekly Review of Indian and World-Problems
from the Hindu Standpoint.

Medical Supplement

‘विकिसितात्पुण्यतमं न किञ्चिदपि शुश्रुमः’ । ‘बिभेत्यल्पश्रुताद्देदो मामयं प्रहरिष्यति’

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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

C. Rangayya, sub-assistant surgeon, Vinjamoor finds fault with the Editor of the *Hindu* that he had "supported the theory of three humours, Vata, Pitta, Sleshman" in his issue of the 27th October. What really appears in the *Hindu* of that date is a review on the "Report of the Special Committee of the Dravida Vaidya Mandal and the Madras Ayurveda Sabha in reply to Dr. Koman's report on Indigenous drugs" Says the *Hindu* thus:—"The writers of the report have discussed the findings of Dr. Koman piece-meal and attempted to expose the utter hollowness of the conclusion formed by the latter that Ayurveda is still sunk in a state of 'empirical obscurity' they also point out to the doctor's failure and incapacity to understand the fundamental hypothesis of the Ayurveda, the principle of the three humours without which the Hindu Science is absolutely incomprehensible." It will thus be seen that the Editor of the "*Hindu*" thinks that the writers of the said report have established the scientific basis of Ayurveda.

Mr. C. Rangayya next asks:—"What are these humours? Do they belong to any system in the body? How do they show themselves in the pulse? Do they comprehend all the diseases pertaining to every organ in the body?" He further adds:—"and various other questions crop up." Yes they do, but what is the remedy? He suggests that if he (the *Hindu* Editor) welcomed criticism upon the three humours he would be doing public service. But we very much doubt whether the *Hindu* will be able to open its columns for such scientific criticisms; being devoted more for the burning political questions of the day it can only do some occasional job in medicine. The best place for such criticisms is the medical magazines and journals devoted to scientific subjects. It is exactly to meet such a pressing need that we have now begun to issue this Medical Supplement. Mr. C. Rangayya is therefore welcome in these columns to have his views ventilated.

If Mr. C. Rangayya wishes to know something of the Vata, Pitta, and Kapha, he must try to get a

copy of the "Report of the Special Committee" mentioned before, which will give him some food for his thought. He will, then, be in a fit position to state his case with precision. For the questions now asked by him are not exact and an attempt to answer them will not be of any use to him as he has to understand certain fundamental principles.

For the present he will have to be satisfied with the following short answers to his questions in their order:—(1) These humours are certain principles that control the functions of the various organs of the body (2) Yes. (3) By controlling the variations in the beats of the pulse. (4) Yes.

Mr. C. Rangayya boldly declares that "surely it is absurd to be feeling the pulse as per Vata, Pitta, Sleshman when a lady after parturition is dying of post-partum haemorrhage or when a patient is dying of Cholera with vomittings and purgings." He has not explained why it should be absurd. If the pulse-feeling becomes absurd surely stethoscope also is entitled to become so.

He next says:—"If these humours cannot be explained according to physiology and pathology surely they have to be given up and those that practise it must be condemned." If he gets a copy of the "report of the Special Committee" he will find that they have been explained "according to physiology and pathology." He further adds "If they are true, surely medical men who practise the allopathic system, must adopt them." But we very much doubt whether the allopaths, at least a majority of them, will be willing to adopt them.

A series of interesting and instructive lectures on "some suggestions for the improvement of Ayurveda" were delivered in several parts of Madras under the auspices of the Sri Chennapuri Ayurveda Pracharini Sabha, in connection with the Sri Dhanvantari Jayanti which was celebrated on the *Aswina Krishna Trayodasi* in a very grand and fitting manner at the Madras Ayurvedic College and the Dravida Vaidya Mandal.

“The Bombay Vaidya Sammelan.”

I.

The Twelfth All India Vaidya Sammelan was held in Bombay on the 6th April and on the following days this year. As previously arranged at the last Indore Vaidya Sammelan, Dr. Popat Prabhu Ram L. M. S. undertook the responsibility of conducting the Sammelan at Bombay. It was under very distressing difficulties that he had to conduct the Conference. The office of the Mahamandal which is the standing committee of the Vaidya Sammelan is situated in Madras from 1918. The man who was at the helm all these years was no less a person than Vaidyaratna Pundit D. Gopalachariu who, it may safely be asserted, was one of the distinguished gentlemen who founded the Vaidya Sammelan. In September last year this noble soul suddenly expired after a short period of illness which came as a terrible shock on the Vaidya world throughout India and particularly in our Presidency. The work of the Mahamandal was paralysed for a time so that there was nobody to give timely advice to Dr. Popat Prabhu Ram, L. M. S. as regards the holding of the Vaidya Sammelan at Bombay. Adequate information was thus not available to him and hence all sorts of irregularities appeared to hinder the progress of the conduct of the Sammelan. Above all it will be surprising to many of our readers that the President of the Sammelan was not fixed till the last hour of the Sammelan. Various respectable gentlemen were approached but the request was coolly rejected by them for reasons best known to them. At last when there was only six days more for the Sammelan the selection happily fell on the best man in every respect. Kaviraj Harana Chandra Chakravarti was elected President of the Sammelan. That noble soul comes from Bengal. Hitherto the Presidents of the Sammelan were men who had exceptional qualifications, fit for the post, peculiar to modern environments. Sri Harana Chandra Chakravarti is one of those brilliant stars who have made their appearance on particular occasions. He belongs to that class of pundits of solid knowledge of the old order fit to be classed with the late venerable Raju Sastrial of Mannargudi, Tanjore District. As far as our knowledge goes he is the last surviving disciple of the late world-renowned Gangadhara Sastri of Bengal who flourished in the seventies and eighties of the last century. His name was a name to conjure with in those days and even now the majority of Vaidyas in Bengal are either directly or indirectly his disciples. The birthplace of our President is a village named Nakalia on the banks of a branch of the Ganges in the district of Pabna. His ancestors trace their origin to that immortal soul Sri Udayana Acharya, the vigorous exponent of the Advaita Vedanta of Sri Sankaracharya, the famous author of “Khandana Khandha Khadya”, “Nyaya Kusumanjali” and other immortal works and the terror of the Buddhists in the 10th Century A. D. How he has preserved the noble traits and matchless scholarship of his family may be gleaned from the original and independent commentary called “Bhashya” on the “Susruta Samhita” which he has written. It is a standard work on Medicine and Surgery fit to hold its place beside the classical works of Bhattara, Jajjeta, Gayadasa, and Chakrapani of the ancient days. He has now put in a practice of over 50 years in medicine so that his age must be

at least 75 years. At a time when the Ayurveda is ridiculed as “out of date”, “prehistoric”, “antiquated” and “unscientific” it is highly refreshing to learn that the great and venerable pundit is practising surgery according to the ancient method of “Susruta”. It was a reproach used to be freely hurled on the indigenous system of medicine that it does not contain surgery and midwifery and even if they could be proved as having existed in the ancient days they have now ceased practically to exist, as the Hindus have forgotten the art long ago. This reproach has been wiped out by our venerable Kaviraj President. He is daily practising surgery after the ancient fashion and hence the art is not dead but is living. It was very fortunate that the Sammelan was able to secure such a venerable soul as its President. He has never come out from Bengal till now. But this year when there was only five or six days for the proposed sitting of the Sammelan he was approached respectfully to be its guide. He is now above seventy and the distance from his home to Calcutta and from Calcutta to Bombay is not encouraging when we take into consideration his age, his withered constitution, and above all the ridiculously short space of time allowed to him. In spite of these discouraging factors the venerable Kaviraj gladly accepted the offer solely for the sacred cause of Ayurveda which he considers to be his birthright and rightly too. To us ordinary men it seems incredible how he was able to prepare his presidential address and get it printed in so short a period. But to him who is not only a master of Ayurveda, but also of every other branch of knowledge, nay, even of the goddess of learning, no special effort is required to prepare an address. Whatever comes from his mouth spontaneously is an eloquent address by itself. If therefore, needs no special mention that the address was a masterpiece vindicating the claims of Ayurveda to stand even superior to the Western system at least in theory and principles. As the learned address is an important document we wish to deal with it at some length in our next article.

K. G. NATESA SASTRI M. R. A. S.

X The Health of a Child.

CUSTOMS TO BE CONDEMNED.

The future of our race depends upon the child, and it is a welcome sign that the public is gradually realising the fact. Unfortunately the best methods by which to raise the average health standard in children have not even yet crystallised into a generally accepted scheme. Appreciating that a host of well-meaning people are daily engaged in welfare work, whose efforts suffer nevertheless from the influence of established popular ideas and certain hard-dying fads of professional practice one is prompted to outline a few of the discrepancies.

THE INFLUENCE OF TRADITION.

To address in the first place, the professional worker, let us impress the fact that race welfare does not depend upon the medical treatment of sick children but upon actual prevention of that sickness. Prevention is possible only through the intelligent co-operation of the public, and parents can only cooperate when they have an intelligent idea of what is expected of them. It is useless to teach them rule-of-thumb methods. They must be brought to understand the true reason for many things they are urged to do. Otherwise it is hopeless to expect the

musual circumstance to be intelligently met. But one of the great difficulties lies in the influence of tradition. In no department of the whole field of medicine does this factor predominate so strongly as in child welfare work. And it is not enough to say that a procedure is wrong. Sound reasons must be advanced which will appeal to the common sense of the average individual.

Let us come, therefore, down to first principles. In a practical sense we must always regard the child simply as one of an animal species and subject to the natural laws which animals observe. If it is normal at birth, its future largely depends on the care and nutrition which it receives. But its career does not begin only at birth. Throughout the whole of gestation it is dependent on the mother, and pre-natal care is an absolute necessity, not necessarily for the prevention of malpositions etc., but for adequate nutrition and development of an intrinsically normal foetus. As a matter of fact, the idea that a large percentage of deliveries require artificial interference is, in itself, fallacious, for in European countries records show that well over 90 per cent of births occur without any instrumental aid. Therefore let it be urged, when the risks in all instrumentation are admitted that among many forceps injuries, not a few might be avoided by a policy of intelligent and watchful waiting. In short, the child must cease to be ever considered a relative byproduct in obstetrics. The circumstances of its birth exert an all-powerful influence upon its ultimate health.

CUSTOMS AND FACTS.

That a baby must be bathed directly after birth is far from true. Infants rapidly lose heat, and should the warmth of the room or water be insufficient, the risks attendant upon a subnormal temperature (bronchitis, etc.) are at once incurred. Acute, even minutely pustular, dermatitis is readily caused by well-meant efforts to remove the vernix caseosa, and the condition is readily exaggerated by the use of an improperly neutralised soap. Another common fallacy, and one causing frequent harm, is the swabbing of the mouths of new-born infants. The gauze so frequently used always strips more or less of the delicate epithelium from the mucous membrane, and is the true cause of some stomatitis cases. The stump of the cord does not require an antiseptic dusting powder. It will mummify and become detached more quickly, and certainly with less danger of infection, if allowed to remain in contact with the air under a simple thickness of gauze. In connection with the belief that exactly daily stools are necessary in a breast-fed child it is noteworthy that Professor Ramsay in a long series of cases in the University of Minnesota Hospital, none of which had any cathartic drug, finds the normal average distinctly higher. In any case, in young infants the normal reflex will occur when sufficient residue has collected, and it is probable that the classical dose of castor oil on the third day is responsible for much of the digestive disturbance often attributed to other causes. The observer already quoted finds that infantile stools, if examined microscopically after a dose of castor oil, usually contain blood. If the doses have been repeated frequently they always do. Castor oil certainly cannot claim the "soothing elements" it is often reputed to possess. Another diagnostic point to be realised is that normal "teething" is not attended by such symptoms as fever, diarrhoea and convulsions. It may do as a satisfying explanation, but on such occasions there is undoubtedly another cause to be sought, though it be only temporary in nature. The eruption of the teeth is a physiological process like the growth of any other organ.

PHYSIOLOGICAL GROWTH.

And mention of normal growth brings one to the question of watching the infant's early developments. All are so familiar with the typical weight chart and the classical dates and figures, that repetition of their details and meaning need not detain us. But in general welfare work it is only in favourable circumstances that these records are accurately kept. Therefore one must look far for outstanding points, particularly such things as the parents are likely themselves to have noted, and therefore be able to help in providing the evidence. In six months and a year respectively a child should be about double and treble its weight at birth. If its height at birth is about 20 inches it should measure about 28 inches at the end of the first year, and another four at the end of the second. The milk teeth are usually complete shortly after two and a half years, and in any event at the end of the third. One mentions these simple points because there is an extraordinary amount of misunderstanding among the public upon normal growth figures and, well-intentioned though they are, the complicated records presented to them by some clinics are really not one-quarter understood. It would be far preferable to popularise some simple standards.

In the effort to make a perfectly satisfactory child "grow", an enormous number of cases of true overfeeding occur. The conditions of modern civilisation have cumulatively tended to multiply the number of children with relatively unstable nervous systems, and in these no greater error than overfeeding can be made. The instinctive idea is that perhaps more nourishment and haphazard "feeding up" will improve the condition, and yet there is no constitutional disability in children for which more can be accomplished by intelligent and careful gradation of the diet. But details are beyond the scope of these notes. Here and elsewhere we have given simple outline indications, and have tried to illustrate the urgent educative principle involved.— "The Hospital."

Some Aspects of Orthodox Brahmin Life from Medical Point of View.

By DR. S. R. KIRLOSAR, M.B., B.S., DHARWAR.

The conventional meaning of Brahman is restricted to one who is born in a Brahmin family. Even in the present depraved state of society, a Brahmin still holds his position high in India. From his peculiar religious customs and social habits he stands aloft from the other castes. His cultured mind, nobility of heart, sense of morality, regard for truth, his habits of cleanliness, and intellectual features hold him boldly in relief from any other class of people. He has inherited all these good qualities from his ancestors. The ancient civilization of India is admitted by the world. I could not believe that so civilized a people could lay down, such hard, stringent and seemingly absurd rules for the guidance of their successors without any motive. This one idea led me to ponder over the subject and in my own humble opinion I have come to the conclusion that the life of the Brahmin has been an alloy of the sciences of medicine, hygiene, sanitation and morality, being nicely blended together in the form religion, so that it should be unconsciously and yet compulsarily followed, leading to his own prosperity, longevity and well-being. Having studied the Brahmin's life from this point of view I have tried to explain in my own humble way the hidden meaning of a few of the religious customs and social habits of Brahmin life.

As every act, each social and religious custom of Brahmin is in my humble opinion based on the knowledge of the presence of bacteria, it would not be out of place to note down a few broad facts about them.

It will not be an exaggeration to say that the fabric of the whole medical science is based upon the invisible vegetable and animal micro-organism. A few all-admitted facts about these are:—

(1) Though invisible to the naked eye they are omnipresent. (2) Where and how these are born is not definitely known (3) In suitable media and favourable circumstances they multiply rapidly and (4) What is food for man is also food for some of them.

So it is clear that it is neither possible nor easy to anticipate and much less to protect one-self from the deadly attacks of the invisible foe of humanity. With the present advancement of knowledge of hygiene, sanitation and bacteriology it has not been possible to formulate a definite code of hygiene and sanitation which can be of practical use for routine life of the public. (A Brahmin's life, however is the best example, of the practical application of all these three sciences.)

It is known to the world how the influenza bacilli did, as it were, challenge the bacteriologists and best scientists and baffled all their attempts at detection. Even with our advanced knowledge of bacteriology, hygiene and sanitation, they carried away in a short time, a very great number of human lives, more than was studiously and systematically attempted by the egoistic cultured nations with the help of a variety of mankilling machines in the four long years of the last continental war. May it be that the horde of influenza bacilli was let loose upon humanity by the Almighty, with a view to ashame the boast of civilized nations even in their methods of human destruction!

Below I wish to describe a few of the social and religious customs of the Brahmin. Let us begin with the social habits. A Brahmin observes the golden rule of "early to bed and early to rise" and though not very wealthy is decidedly healthy and wise. His first duty in the morning is to take special care of teeth and gums after answering the calls of nature. For the teeth he uses the time-honoured, cheap, black burnt cow-dung-cake, which though black-looking is scientifically perfectly clean. It is neither acid nor alkaline in test and yet is an excellent deodorant, a stuff which is just suited for the prevention of decay and decomposition of the food matter in the crevices of the teeth. Some use the fresh sticks of (*Achyranthes aspera*) or (*Acacia Arabia*) Jambul Tree etc., as brushes for teeth cleaning. After this he takes a cold or hot bath which is very refreshing and devotes some time in the worship of God. During this time he performs deep breathing which helps to keep his breathing organs in healthy condition. He rarely suffers from nasal catarrh, sore throat etc. He takes only two meals a day and nothing more; he never takes any stimulating drink like coffee, etc., and never partakes of any food or drink tasted by others; the simple food which he eats twice daily, being however completely digested and thoroughly assimilated. Thus his digestive organs get the necessary rest between the two meals. It is no wonder that this man rarely suffers from heart-burn, dyspepsia, constipation etc. Living on two meals a day only he is quite healthy and gay and is perhaps able to endure any mental and physical stress without feeling fatigue. He minds not the scorching heat of the summer, or the pinching cold of the winter, nor the showers of rain. Being full of radiant energy, a living electric dynamo as it were, he seldom suffers from germicidal and bacterial diseases.

To be concluded.

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