

THE

Hindu Message

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

Medical Supplement

‘चिकित्सितात्पुण्यतमं न किञ्चिदपि शुश्रुमः’ । ‘विभेत्त्यल्पश्रुताद्वेदो मामयं प्रहरिष्यति’

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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

It is expressed in some quarters that the Committee recently appointed by the Government of Madras to investigate into the indigenous systems of medicine in this presidency is found not to be of a representative character. Though we agree that it has not been given for the indigenous systems an equal representation as has been given to the allopathists yet we are compelled to note that the personnel of the Committee from an official standpoint will be defended to be fairly distributed. Dr. A. Laxmipathy Garu and Dr. M. Subramania Iyer, though they belong to the western systems of medicine are superficially considered connected with various Ayurvedic institutions, and are supposed to know Ayurveda well. Further, they are members of the All-India Ayurveda Mahamandal, an important body of a representative character responsible for the improvement of Ayurveda in all India and as such they will be considered representatives of the Ayurveda alone. As for the rest there are one Unani, one siddha or Agastya vaidya, and another Ayurveda vaidya proper. Thus it will be pointed out by our opponents that the indigenous systems are more than fairly represented in the Committee even if we take out of consideration the non-official laymen altogether. What the Committee is going to do or will be able to do for Ayurveda is an open secret and we are not concerned with it now.

But do these gentlemen really represent Ayurveda at all! Laymen who are not in the profession mistake them as representatives of Ayurveda because of their associations in many ayurvedic institutions. It must be remembered that their association with these institutions is in no way to be regarded anything more than as a sympathiser. The mere fact that they are members of the Mahamandal does not qualify them to be called Ayurveda vaidyas. The Director General of Medicine for India, Sir Pardie Lukis, if we were to judge from his utterances, may be called a sympathiser but he cannot, on that account, become an Ayurveda vaidya. Similarly the late Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, who laid the foundation stone of the Ayurvedic and Unani Tikhi College of Delhi may be a sympathiser but not a vaidya. There is a vast gulf in the relation between

an Ayurveda vaidya and a sympathiser of Ayurveda and we want the public to mark this distinction.

If by indiscretion or indifference such men are confounded for real Ayurveda vaidyas proper the public will certainly be doing a disservice to the cause of Ayurveda and nothing more, for such a tendency on their part will tend to create a new class of quacks in the profession which in course of time will be to the detriment of Ayurveda itself. We therefore wish to sound a note of warning to the public against being deluded thereby and disappointed. We also wish to wake up our slumbering professional brothers and warn them "Beware, there is danger ahead."

Let us now consider the personnel of the present Committee. The position of the representatives of the indigenous systems of medicine—excepting the Unani section of it—is but a ridiculous mockery. Of course the representation may be impartial, but their position is altogether unsatisfactory. The majority of the members in the Committee are of a western trained mind holding views of a character quite different from that of the eastern trained mind. They are but admirers of the western system of medicine who are in the majority. Anything and everything that come from the West will therefore appeal to them most and the decision will eventually and naturally be one-sided as the Ayurveda will be in a minority; and as the representatives of Ayurveda are not graduates of a University, they will be at a great disadvantage throughout. Hence the case for Ayurveda, however strong it may be, will fail to be of any interest to them, or if at all they affect to be interested, it will not be appreciable to any degree nor will it produce any tangible result for the improvement of Ayurveda. They being in the majority will saddle the Ayurvedic physicians with their own personal views, notions, and regulations, which will in no way be agreeable to the Ayurvedists. We therefore warn our co-professionists to boycott the Committee altogether and request them not to give any evidence before it if called upon, as anything and everything we may say to them would be used against us. We had a very bad experience in the investigations by Dr. Koman, L. M. S.

X. Is Ayurveda Rational?

Of late there has been much talk in the country both in favour of and against Ayurveda, the enemies of the system denouncing wholesale anything and everything contained in Ayurveda, as irrational, unscientific, antiquated, unprogressive and the like, while the votaries challenging the unfounded, and untenable basis of these charges. Apart from these two interested sections of the people in the country there is a third section, watching the progress of the controversy. To such of our impartial judges we are bound to explain that the case is not what it is represented to be by the enemies of Ayurveda, and that the charges arrayed against Ayurveda are absolutely unwarranted and unjustified. Of the several charges laid against it there is one with which we will deal in the present article and that is *irrational*. Is Ayurveda irrational? Before proving that Ayurveda is nothing but rational we have to clearly acquaint ourselves with the definition of the words rational and irrational.

What is meant by rational? The word, says Annandale, is derived from ratio meaning reason. Rational means then, having reason or the faculty of reasoning; endowed with reason; agreeable to reason not unreasonable, foolish or the like; acting in conformity to reason; wise; judicious. If this is the meaning of rational we have to know if Ayurveda satisfies these terms. Does Ayurveda agree to reason at all? That means are the principles laid down in Ayurveda, which is a broad term used to represent all the principles elaborated in the system, in conformity to reason, wise and judicious?

The whole system of Ayurveda is based fundamentally upon the most important and primary functional agents called the three humours Vata, Pitta and Kapha. It is upon this principle the whole of Ayurveda hinges and which is the crux in the system that baffles the imaginations of our allopathists all over the country. We have already explained in the pages of the "*Hindu Message*" what these humours are, how they could be identified in the organism and what relation they hold therein.

It is necessary to warn our readers here that these three doshas are not the old exploded humoral theory. They have been wrongly identified, mistranslated by many ill-informed foreigners and this has mainly contributed to their being misunderstood by our critics in this country and elsewhere.

To say that these doshas are the hypothetical basis upon which the system of Ayurveda is built up, is no imagination or exaggeration. But they have satisfied for a long time and still satisfy the condition required for a hypothetical basis. We have therefore to abide by the result of such an acceptance until it is proved that this hypothesis is wrong. The onus of proving lies on the shoulders of the critics of Ayurveda and not upon those of the Ayurvedists themselves. We shall see what a hypothesis is?

A hypothesis, is a theory or a system imagined, or assumed, for the purposes of argument to account for what is not understood. That means when a certain object is beyond our comprehension or what we call Pratyaksha, we assume certain basis for the purpose of investi-

gation by deduction and try to arrive at a correct understanding of the object. The basis thus assumed is what we call a hypothesis. When by reasoning we arrive at a conclusion which is different from the basis or hypothesis we assumed, then it is generally understood that either of the one must be wrong and we still endeavour to arrive at a coinciding result. If on the other hand the conclusions of our investigations coincide with the data assumed as the basis or the hypothesis for the enquiry we satisfy ourselves that our hypothesis is correct. When this hypothesis satisfies us well at all times under given conditions we hold it as universal. This in brief is the nature of a hypothetical basis which is common for all nations, whether of the East or the West.

In mathematics, science philosophy,—in every branch of science we see this principle followed both in the West and the East and we cannot therefore say that this method of argumentation is peculiar to any particular nation or individual. Hence we feel confident that our critics will not deny the ayurvedists alone the privilege, which they themselves enjoy, of making use of such instruments of knowledge as mentioned above, in establishing their own case.

It may be mentioned here that the bacillus theory, which is accepted to be one most satisfying, in accounting for all the phenomena that takes place under certain morbid conditions in the system is itself an hypothetical basis for with all the powerful and sensitive instruments at our disposal, it has been assumed that there are certain micro-organisms which are beyond the perfective capacity of these instruments. If this is so is it not a hypothetical basis?

Then granting that these germs are the causative agents of a particular disease, how do they cause the disease? Let us suppose that these germs render the organs become morbid or diseased and cause the disease? Whence did these germs obtain that power or capacity to thus disorganise the functions of the organs in the system? Why does this particular germ produce a particular disease? We find no satisfactory solution for these questions; but on the other hand assume that they possess such and such power alone in rendering the system morbid. Is this not a hypothetical basis?

In the same way the Ayurvedists also have assumed a hypothetical basis in the shape of the three functional agents or doshas ordinarily called the three humours. What are these three humours? We shall see.

As a result of long experience, study and investigation the Ayurvedists have found that certain symptoms invariably and unfailingly appear under certain morbid conditions in the system.

That it is so we can plainly see if we would only care to investigate and know. These symptoms on a superficial enquiry will be found to be capable of being classified and arranged, under various heads. If the investigations were to be pushed on further it can be reduced to a minimum head thus rendering a simplicity possible from a diversity. The result of such an investigation is what we have now been given in the shape of a hypothetical basis.

The symptoms were, in Ayurveda, thus classified under three heads. These three heads were given a name as vata, pitta, and kapha. We have

no quarrel over these names. They may be christened in any way as the inventor pleases. We are concerned only with the actions and the results of these agents. The Ayurvedists called them vata pitta and kapha, while the allopaths termed them in a different way. These namings are, after all, intended only for convenience. Thus the Ayurvedists assumed this hypothetical basis as the working basis for their system to which they reduced all and every phenomena that take place in the system. If this hypothesis works well and satisfies the conditions required for its infallibility what harm will there be if we accept the theory as perfect and universal.

In practical experience we have seen, from the results, that they are so. Says Susruta—

"By the texts, by the result, and by inference," We say that the theory is unailing and therefore correct. By inferential deduction we arrived at certain conclusions which we tested by practical experience. The result was coinciding, and is also supported by the texts.

Thus we see that the theory of the three humours or the doshas as we generally call it, are not the imaginations of an idle dreamer, but the result of constant practice, serious study, keen observation and above all the result of long experience. It is inferred from the results alone which of course is corroborated from practical knowledge.

To say therefore that it is not based upon or is in conformity to reason, is but idle and ridiculous. If an inferential knowledge is not based upon reason, then Newton's gravitation theory also will be in the same plane. This theory already existed even before Newton was born. But it was for Newton that the credit and the honour was reserved. Until a keen intellect with a mind for observation arises the thing remains there unearthed or unexplored. In the same way these functional agents remain there in the system which the Ayurvedists explored, after great sacrifice and by reasoning, they put to test later, and arrived at the conclusion which they have enunciated in their text books. The West is now in a similar way, on the way to find out a firm and universal basis for their system which would satisfy the various phenomena that are otherwise inexplicable in their systems.

If this is not rational what, then, will be considered a rational one? If this is not agreeable to reason what then will satisfy their reasoning?

We may in this connection observe that the ideals between the East and the West are altogether different. The East considers science as being based on the principle that everything should be reduced from diversity to simplicity while the West considers it the reverse. They consider science, a progressive one which is of course the same for the East as well. But that progress, the modern scientists seem to consider, should be ever changing without a certainty of any kind. Where they are drifting to we do not know nor are we concerned with. But that has contributed much to their failure in very many cases. The Ayurvedists on the other hand, have developed to such perfection that they have already reached their goal and enunciated a theory which will not fail them at any time and under any circumstance or condition.

The Active Principle in Medicinal Drugs.—VII*

By ELIYURKAR, G. SUBRAHMANYA SARMA.

The system which has withstood the test of the times for over 3000 years cannot be killed by hatred. But the hatred that is shown against it will rather accelerate the progress in the work of its revival instead of hindering it. Blind faith in one's own superiority is sure to harm the cause than help it. We may therefore sound a warning to the Western medical man that a "liberal co-operation of both" alone will "be a source of help to the profession and to the people not only of India but of the world."

No one can expect to master a Science without undergoing a disciplinary training under a qualified teacher for a sufficient number of years which the importance of the science may require. Without such a studentship it will be quite impossible to understand the technicalities or the true import of the science. It is idle therefore to expect a comprehensive knowledge of the science in half an hour's conversation in a tramway or a railway journey. Nor is it possible to realise the real import of the science by merely investing on the purchase of certain text books and leave them to adorn the table and show to the credulous public that the individual has taken pains to master the science. It will only help to play quackery on those who resort to them for such aid as they may be able to give them in their professional lines. It may even help to fill his pockets by posing to be a master of both the systems of medicine. But it is sure to do havoc on the mass ending in very great danger which will surely be detrimental to the interest of both the system and the people.

If the Ayurveda is enveloped in an unintelligible, antiquated and dead language so also are the other systems. If one can spare a decade to qualify himself for an entry into a studentship and spend a further time of six years to master a particular branch of the science, surely it is not a sin that the Ayurveda insists upon a regular course of instruction running over a certain number of years before an individual can be expected to have become a qualified one.

The language difficulty is everywhere the same whether it is an eastern or a western system. It will be no bar to really willing students who may wish to make an impartial study of the science. At any rate to those of our Indian students who cannot understand Sanskrit, any other language besides their vernaculars is surely foreign in the same way as the former is. They cannot therefore complain against the language difficulty which they have never endeavoured to overcome. Nor have they ever tried to pick up a knowledge of that language sufficient to grasp the true import of the science. It is therefore unreasonable on the part of such critics to disclaim Ayurveda on this basis. A system can never become unscientific or unintelligible because of the language in which it is written. It will on the other hand clearly expose the inability of the reader to understand the principles of the science rather than disprove the scientific basis of the system itself.

But the logical conclusion of our countrymen is otherwise and their diseased mind can entertain no arguments in repudiation of their biased so-called *logical conclusions*. Surely "the antiquated Sanskrit names could not impart the acceptability that the jaw-breaking Latin names of the British Pharmacopoea can."

In acquiring sound knowledge at first hand the ancients had been very liberal; they even went the

* The first six articles have already appeared in the previous issues of "The Hindu Message."

length of inviting to theirs or visiting the huts of even shepherds and cowherds and tried to learn from them such of the knowledge they might have acquired in regard to the identification and properties of drugs. They also used to find the forest men, a source of great help in this matter. Their thirst for knowledge and their liberality to acquire and adopt such knowledge into their system will be evident from the fact that none was despised who could convey to them such a true knowledge as would help to further the progress of their system. This statement can be very well substantiated from numerous references in our now extant Ayurvedic authorities.

Having acquired that knowledge from different sources it will be interesting to know, that the ancients had managed to reduce them to their common basis—the five elements and find out the active principle of that drug in terms of their peculiar terminology which is hard to be reconciled or understood by the so-called scientific minds of the West. They had adopted this peculiar terminology not only for the vegetable drugs but also for the mineral ones. This must clearly open the eyes of our critics as to the high standard of perfection to which the ancients had developed their system.

The use of minerals in medicine is still in its infancy in the West and we are not aware if they have got any knowledge of the active principles at all, of these minerals used in medicine though they be few. The active principle theory so far as we could know in the West, is adopted only with regard to the vegetable drugs. It is hard to know how then the theory of active principle holds good in all the several substances used as a medicine. It has already been pointed out in these pages that the theory of active principle as understood by the West is still imperfect and has to be further investigated before its infallibility as a generalised theory could be sufficiently established.

We shall herein point out that the theory of active principle is not the monopoly of the West alone. They have yet to learn the real importance of the active principle, if it is to be effectively applied to practical medicine, from the East and identify them, before they begin to make use of their knowledge, in terms of the Rasa Virya Vipaka of the Eastern system and try to understand the true bearing it has on the functional agents—the Vata, Pitta and Kapha.

According to the West every substance when analysed is said to contain various compounds in definite proportions, of which some are more predominant than others. This predominant substance influences the properties of the drug and acts on the system when administered as a medicine though the less important compounds are found to some extent, to have some influence on the action of the predominant compound showing thereby that the various compounds in the substance have each to do their own functions in their own sphere. This truth has been already explained in these pages in the case of Aconiti Radix. This predominant substance is considered to be the active principle in a drug.

If that is so, it is necessary that we must know of the definite characteristics of the active principle as understood by the West. Is it an element or a compound? Is it a matter or a force? Is it a substance or a property? It can be definitely stated that an active principle in a drug is not a property but a substance. It may similarly be shown that it is not a force but a matter and that matter is a compound and not an element. For an "element is a substance incapable of decomposition into simpler substances by any known means" (A School Chemistry by Wilson and Hadley) This definition of an

element clearly establishes without any fear of contradiction that the active principle of a drug is not an element as the former is further divisible by chemical processes. It may be found, from a perusal of the result of decomposition by analytical process of the substance Aconiti Radix referred to in these pages, that the composition of a vegetable drug is composed of various other substances, which are themselves compounds and admit of further analysis. For, should it be an element it cannot admit of any further decomposition by any known methods. The compound character of the active principle of a drug will therefore be found well established beyond doubt.

Swarna - Rathnakaram

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Prepared by Pandit C. T. ARUMUGAM PILLAY, Ayurvedic Doctor, and the member of the Committee on the indigenous systems of medicine (the Ayurvedic and Unani) and son of Ayurveda Bhaskara C. T. SUBRAMANIA PANDITHAR, the author of such rare works as "Jeevarakshamirtham" and other Ayurvedic Shastras.

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