

# Hindu Message

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

## Medical Supplement

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

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### NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Col. Ross, Sanitary, Commissioner of Behar and Orissa, carried out experiments with the water of the Ganges in conjunction with Dr. N. K. Bagchi. River waters were presumed to be alkaline throughout the year, but they become acid in reaction in the monsoons, upsetting the calculation of the quantity of alum necessary for sedimentation. After having daily carried on an experiment with the water for 21 months he found that the change began in April before the commencement of the rains, and reached a maximum in August, the acidity sometimes rising above 20 parts in 100,000. The acidity was due to the presence of free CO<sub>2</sub> in the water. He also found by experiments that the addition of lime restored the condition necessary for good sedimentation. According to Col. Ross, the river waters should either be settled in a series of large settling tanks or be treated with lime in order to prepare them for final purification.

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In the manufacture of the alkaloids, hyoscyamine and atropine, Belladonna root is largely used it being convenient to extract them from the root than from the leaf. The European supplies of medicinal plants having been cut off during the late war, there was a demand upon the Indian market with the result that an industry in drug cultivation is steadily growing up in this country. Recently samples of Belladonna leaves were received from a farm at Mungpoo (Darjeeling) for assay in the laboratory School of Chemical Technology, Calcutta, and the results obtained so far seem to be fairly satisfactory. With more care given to the subject and under technical guidance, Indian Belladonna and Indian drugs generally will constitute valuable medicinal resources of the British Empire. So far as alkaloidal extraction is concerned, supplies of Belladonna may be supplemented by *Datura*, which grows wild in India.

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A number of new institutions for the treatment of *kala-azar* patients have been opened in the *kala-azar* infected areas in Assam and all existing Government and Local Board dispensaries in these areas have been equipped to treat the disease.

The Assam Government have issued a leaflet in which the following paragraphs occur :

People who are suffering from *kalazar*, a disease which was formerly incurable, can now save their lives by attending one of the institutions twice a week for three months, or if they are too ill to come for treatment from their own homes, they can seek admission to the nearest indoor hospital. No charge is made for the treatment either indoor or out door, and to those who are admitted to hospital, food on a generous scale is supplied, with free clothing and bedding and every effort is made to ensure their comfort.

A new test has been introduced to enable the doctor to distinguish between *Kala-azar* and chronic malaria, and every one who is suffering from a continued fever with splenic enlargement should present himself for examination at the nearest of these institutions. If the doctor after examining his blood tells him that he has got *kala-azar* he should commence treatment at once and continue it till he is cured. Remember that it is dangerous to stop the treatment before the doctor advises that the cure is complete else, the disease may recur and be more difficult to cure. Very early treatment of a *kala-azar* patient is imperative if you would save the other members of your family and perhaps also your neighbours from acquiring the disease. Do not delay to seek the advice and treatment which you can obtain from the nearest of the institutions.



## Dyspepsia and its Self Treatment.

By JADU NATH GANGULY, B. A., M. B. (CAL.)

Dyspepsia means bad digestion or indigestion, from Greek *Dus*—bad and *peptuo*—to digest. It attacks all human beings regardless of age, sex, rank or nationality, and is the mother of a hundred diseases. People generally pay attention to things visible or nearest to them. But the stomach, though very near us is out of sight, and therefore out of mind. Very few of us know in what sort of a vessel, the food we swallow falls, and fewer still care to know how it is digested. Hence digestion is the most neglected of our interests and dyspepsia the most common and obstinate of all diseases. More than half the human race is perpetually suffering from it. Like consumption fit is fast spreading its ravages through India, Burma and Ceylon especially in our cities and towns.

Causes are predisposing and exciting:—

1. *The Predisposing causes*,—are those which render the individual liable to the disease. First among them are the conditions of civilized life. Animals only eat and drink when hungry and thirsty, and therefore seldom suffer dyspepsia, so does the savage man. The only clock that strikes the hour of his dinner is his hunger which ensures good digestion. But civilized man, being under conventional rules, has often to eat when not yet hungry or to eat in hurry and anxiety. Dyspepsia is indeed a disease of modern civilization and high pressure life.

2. *Climate*.—The colder, within certain limits the climate, the keener the appetite and the greater the power of digestion. In Russia people have as a rule excellent digestive powers. In the British isles people can digest an amount of food, which they when coming to the tropics cannot. This is one of the reasons why they on coming out to India suffer so much from indigestion especially in the hot season, if they forget this difference in digestive power created by climate, and indulge in food and drink proper to their own country. In their frigid climate the Laplanders and the Esquimaux digest enormous quantities of the flesh of the rein deer, the seal and the walrus, but in their hot and humid climate, the Assamese, the Bengalee, the Oryah and the Madrassese are repleted with a much smaller quantity of rice and vegetable diet and suffer too often from indigestion, diarrhoea, and dysentery. But the other extreme, namely intense heat, also produces a digestive power in those accustomed to such heat. [see later on.]

3. *Age*—has remarkable influence on digestion. The infant up to the age of 2 or 3 years, can digest a large amount of milk; and indigestion is only possible if its mother or nurse feeds it too much by mistaking the cry of pain for hunger. The real dyspepsia period commences after dentition is complete. From this time up to the age of 10 or 11 years, the child a novice in the art of eating, commits many mistakes and gets many a spell of indigestion. From about the 12th to the 25th or 30th year, growth goes on rapidly and digestion remains remarkably good. After 30 with accumulating cares and anxieties dyspepsia gets hold of too many men, and in the case of women of the poorer middle class, with their burden of domestic duties becomes more and more pronounced after every child birth. At last at about the age of 50, the digestive power naturally declines. Henceforth we begin to tread on delicate ground, and he that would digest his food properly, must needs be very cautious, as to quantity and quality. From 60 begins the second period of childhood, in an inverse order of digestive power, so that with each increasing year the

less an old man or woman eats the better remains the digestive power, until at last at 80 or 90 the most careful of us has to return this mortal coil to mother earth and the elements and becomes free from the necessity of eating. Very few have the fortune or misfortune of reaching 100 years.

4. *Temper*.—A cheerful temper is beyond all doubt, like hunger the best sauce for good digestion. Hence kings and potentates in many countries formerly allowed and even now allow music to be played, and wit and pleasantry to keep the mind cheerful at meal times. Country people on account of less anxiety can digest better than city residents. Again, a healthy man when enjoying a hearty meal, will at once turn away from it and perhaps be sick on receiving the news of a sudden calamity. On the contrary a person tossing in bed with anxiety and refusing all food, will if good news be suddenly received, sit up and eat with pleasure. Truly has it been said that best physicians for this as for many other diseases are "Dr. Diet, Dr. Quiet and Dr. Merryman."

4. *Habit*.—The rich man eating dainty food, and spending his time in idleness, is so full of dyspepsia that he has neither the appetite nor the pleasure of eating enjoyed by the day labourer. The libertine who defies all laws of health is punished not only by a bad liver and indigestion but by an early grave or funeral pyre. The upper class Hindu or Mussulman lady, spending her time in reading novels and playing cards is troubled with her afternoon acidity. The sanyasi sitting straight as a rod and stiff as a rock in his meditation, can compel hunger and thirst to fly away from him for several days.

6. *Occupation*.—The soldier, the mason the hewer of wood and all who labour outdoors have excellent appetite. But the student, burning his midnight oil is robbed of his appetite. The universities prescribe for him heaps of books, the contents of which he must cram down into his mind. And when they are in, out goes his digestive power. The clerk at the desk, driving his pen shortly after a full knows not that by so doing, he is driving to the brain the blood that should be on the stomach, and thus writing down not only his master's accounts but as it were, his own, destiny too, a short and dyspeptic life. The judge on the bench, sitting immovably for many hours a day, sifting grains of truth, from cart loads of truths so distresses his mind that he suffers dyspepsia or its cousin diabetes. But the Magistrate with his active habits generally escapes them. The statesman, the author, the Editor, the merchants, all suffer in the way from sedentary habits and intense thinking. The employees in the offices and factories of our large cities who live at night in the country and reach their places of business in the morning by railway or tram save little time to take their breakfast quietly and none at all to rest after it. To them "unquiet meals" as the poet says "bring ill digestion," Nay, their lot compels them to make digestion impossible. For they run panting to catch the train, and keep shaking and jolting when it runs, as if to prevent the secretion of gastric juice upon the food eaten.

7. *Heredity*.—If during her pregnancy the child will probably be a lifelong dyspeptic and have bad liver owing to such mother's milk, sometimes all the brothers and sisters of such a family are affected with the disease. The father's influence is not manifest. But the disease may come down from maternal grandmother, to mother and her children.

II Exciting causes are those which so excite the system as to produce the disease at once. These are:—



*First. Eating in a hurry.* The greatest pleasure of eating is felt not in the chewing but in the swallowing when the food is gliding down the root of the tongue. Hence Epicureans who only care for the pleasure, swallow food without well chewing and bring on ill-digestion. On the other hand those who are compelled to swallow quickly to save time, also suffer from it.

*2nd. Eating in Excess* is the most potent cause of indigestion, liver enlargement, gout and albuminuria. "The platter kills more than the sword" says Osler. Sometimes it is seen, that a man eats much, and yet does not get ill. Such a man is generally found to be not very intelligent. Being a great man in the functions of the stomach he cannot be great in those of the brain. But wait, his greater punishments are yet to come. He engorges his stomach, and thereby his life both of which are, in his case, slow but sure to revenge. And when the hour of reckoning comes, he breaks down under some disorder of the digestive system. The writer has never seen a voracious eater having long life. "Eat little if you would eat much, eat much, if you would eat little" is an Indian proverb, which means that by eating a small quantity at a time, you live long, and therefore in the long run, eat much. But if you eat much at a time you get ill, die soon, and therefore the total quantity you eat in your life is not much. As if nature invites us here on this earth, to have a fixed quantity of food in a life time which we may eat quickly and quickly go out of the world, or eat it in small quantities and remain here a long number of years.

*3rd. Eating at too little or too long intervals.* Eating irregularly, between meals is just as potent a cause of this disease as eating at too long intervals. If a healthy man, leading an active life, allows 10 or 12 hours to pass between his morning and evening meals, without any food, he is sure to have dyspepsia after a time, such a long fast is not so bad at night when the person is in bed as during the day. Long starvation as in famine stricken persons, robs the victim of digestive power.

*4th. Efficacy of particular ingredients of food* brings on peculiar form of dyspepsia. Thus rickets is a disease of children due to give them too little milk and too much starchy food. Deficiency of vegetable and vegetable acids leads to scurvy, a form of dyspepsia, and gastritis is too often the result of want of fresh meat, and eating preserved meat.

*5th. Quality:* Green or dried vegetables, stale and semi-decomposed food and adulterated food cause this disease. The fearful adulteration of food articles in our markets, is responsible for innumerable cases of indigestion and liver complaint and should be put down by the strong hand of the state.

*6th Too hot or too cold food or drink* irritates or paralyzes the thin covering of stomach, the mucous membrane, prevents secretion and thus brings on dyspepsia. The least temperature at which food and drink should be taken is that of our body 98.4 or in the cold season, slightly over. To take steaming milk or tea or iced drinks habitually is to invite dyspepsia.

*7th. Drinking too much liquid:* In this hot country the temptation to drink large quantities of water and other liquids in the hot season is irresistible. Unfortunately many people do not know that so innocent a thing as pure water can produce dyspepsia. But it is apparent that an unduly large quantity must reduce the temperature of the stomach, lessen the

secretion of gastric juice, dilate and weaken it, and so bring on dyspepsia.

*8th. Intoxigants* (to be considered later on.)

*9th. Certain foods.* Crabs, mussels, pork, hard boiled eggs, cucumbers, onions, garlic, horse radish, caulie flower, cabbages and many other articles ferment and produce this disease. "Dyspepsia," said a distinguished physician, "is due to a stomach overladen with flesh meat and sauces."

*10th. Certain diseases.* Malaria, anæmia, phthisis, gout, rheumatism, Bright's disease, liver and heart disease and all wasting diseases cause it. It is also the forerunner of many serious diseases.

*11th. Pregnancy.* The dyspepsia of pregnancy may be called the "insanity of the tongue and stomach." The pregnant woman hates the daintiest food but still eats chalk and slate.

*Indian Medical Record.*

### Ghi as Food for Infants.

Prof Nibaran Chandra Bhattacharya contributes to the *Calcutta Review* a valuable article on the "Ancient Medical achievements of Indians". In his paper there occurs the following as regards the use of Ghee as food for the nutrition of children:—

Due to the deficiency of fat various diseases are developed, and children cease to grow. It has also been found that butter is the most important of fats. Fat from the flesh of animals or oil or artificial butter cannot replace butter fat. Butter fat contains an important constituent of food, called fat-soluble vitamin, which is absolutely necessary for the growth of children. For want of this substance growth stops. This substance is also found in green vegetables, and herbivorous animals like the cow obtain their supply of vitamin from grass. The milk of cows which are fed on fresh grass is richer in vitamin than that of cows which are fed on dry grass or straw; for during the process of drying a good deal of the vitamin disappears. Vitamin is also considerably damaged by heat. Thus butter contains much more vitamin than *ghi* which is produced by heating butter. A much larger quantity of *ghi* than butter is required to supply the vitamin content of food. Probably the difficulty of preserving butter led people to store it as *ghi*.

The writer quotes the following lines from Short's *Newer Physiology*:—

Rickets is no doubt another deficiency disease. Infants are usually fed upon a diet containing too much starch and sugar and too little fat and protein. The observations of Bland-Sutton at the London Zoo rather point the deficiency of fat as being the more important. A lioness there was unable to suckle for long and litter after litter of cubs had died of rickets. Investigation of the diet showed that they were fed upon London cabhorse which naturally did not supply any fat, and their little teeth were not able to crush the bones and obtain the marrow. When they were



given milk, codliver oil and pounded bones they did excellently.

#### GHI AS TUBERCULOSIS CURE.

The same writer has the following lines on the medicinal virtue of Ghi in curing cases of tuberculosis;

That fat is a very useful remedy in tuberculosis is well-known in Bengal. Not only such patients are given plenty of fat in their diet but a large number of Kaviraji medicines used in this disease consists mainly of fat. A Bengali professor was once cured of it by excessive use of fat in food prescribed by an ascetic, whom he saw when he failed to get any relief from ordinary medical treatment. He was given daily a large quantity of ghi to drink. At first he had diarrhoea but he still persisted in the treatment. The quantity of ghi was gradually increased and after some time he could drink and digest a large quantity of raw ghi without much discomfort.

#### HOMA A DISINFECTANT CEREMONY.

While on this subject the learned writer could not omit to notice, however, briefly, the benefits of Ghi, when employed in the *Homa* or *Havan* ceremony.

The room really undergoes purification through the process and any noxious disease germs which might have got a lodgement in it are removed or destroyed in the process. First of all the room undergoes thorough cleansing with water before the ceremony can take place. Then a good deal of smoke is produced by the fire which is seldom allowed to burn freely causing complete combustion. From time to time Ganges water, milk, raw fruits and green leaves of the *bel* are added to it; these nearly extinguish it and considerable amount of smoke is produced. The result of the operation is that the whole room, even the house, remains filled for two to three hours with smoke containing water vapour, carbolic acid, creosote and the essential oils of flowers and *bel* leaves (these last contain a good deal of essential oil.) Thus every crevice and corner of the room is more or less completely disinfected by the process.

#### THE DISINFECTING PROPERTIES OF SMOKE.

Objection is often raised to *Havan* on the ground that the process emits smoke. There is a clear injunction in the Shastras that the fire of *Homa* should be kept burning brightly. That some quantity of smoke is yet engendered cannot be denied. The smoke, too, has however, its beneficent effects. Says the learned Professor:—

I have come to the conclusion that within limits, smoke is not an unmitigated nuisance, but is a good disinfectant. If a room or house is not properly purified by the sun's rays and currents of fresh air, it is far better that it should be purified by smoke. The smoke of wood is probably better than that of coal.

—The Vedic Magazine.

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