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EDITORIAL

PHYSICIAN HEAL THYSELF

Man lives in a society today whose moral and ethical values are being eroded continuously by his lust for material gains. He has built for himself a hostile environment full of hatred, mistrust, anger, jealousy and suspicion. These are expressions of an imbalanced and frustrated human mind. A physician is a part of this society and is expected to function as a healer of these social ills, which present to him as diseases bearing different nosological tags. In order that he is able to perceive the cause behind the imbalanced expressions, he has to be a balanced and integrated personality. It demands a certain discipline of mind on his part, so that his actions are balanced. Such discipline he can enforce on himself only if he looks upon his profession with a sense of devotion. Hahnemann calls it a *mission*. He opens the first aphorism of the *Organon of Medicine*, addressing those who aspire to become physicians, warning them of the type of commitment that is demanded of them by the profession. Yet, it is a common experience for the physicians to enter the profession, paying little heed to the warning given by Hahnemann, and having entered it start questioning the wisdom of his writings when they encounter rough weather in practice. The dimension of this problem in the field of Homoeopathy is growing at such a fast pace that it calls for urgent remedial measures. The earlier its advocates recall the axiom, '*Physician Heal Thyself*' and act vigorously upon it, brighter are the chances for the Hahnemannian Homoeopathy to survive and carry on with its avowed mission of establishing a happy and healthy humanity.

Life and activity are synchronous with each other. When life ceases the activity comes to a grinding halt. All activity is not subject to the dictates of the will. The wilful activity is a resultant expression of an individual's thoughts and feelings. Man, unlike the lower forms of life, is gifted with reason which enables him to balance and regulate his actions by aligning his thoughts and the feelings. It serves him like a watchdog, restricting his activities within the framework of a certain value system which he determines for himself.

Man's activities are confined to the environment in which he lives and with which he constantly interacts. The sensory inputs that travel into him from the environment through his sensory organs are received by the brain, interpreted by the mind and acted out through the body. A highly complicated process of this order is ensured only by a balanced functioning of the different co-ordinates of his system. Any tension impedes this process and sets an imbalance which gets immediately reflected in his behaviour and actions. Reason acts as a regulator and maintains this delicate and vital balance, so that, his thoughts remain pure, emotions are contained and the body is preserved.

The biological existence of man demands the fulfilment of the basic needs common to all forms of life namely, its preservation and propagation. These needs take the man to his environment in constant search of them. As long as he limits such excursions only to satisfy the needs fundamental to the continuation of life, a state of equilibrium is maintained, which permits its balanced growth, recognised as health. But oftener than not, the man converts his needs into wants and runs after objects that provide pleasurable sensations to him. In course of time a happy attachment develops between the two and man diverts all his thoughts for finding means of acquiring the objects that satisfy his desires. This is the starting point of all human illness, wherein the reason gets obscured and actions tend to become eccentric. What hitherto has been a healthy interaction between him and the environment is converted into a battle-field of conflicts, from which grow out anger, sadness, jealousy, suspicion, hatred and a score of other emotional aberrations. A system acting under pressure of an imbalanced mind initially resists, but later succumbs to it giving rise to a thousand other structural and functional disorders, which the medical science has systematically classified into diseases bearing different names.

A physician who is educated to identify the diseases by their superficial characteristics, observing only the abnormal functioning of the physical apparatus, lacks the depth and penetration to perceive the problems presented by his patients in their totality. It requires of him to possess the understanding of how a human mind functions in health, and how diseases evolve when it is deranged. Studying the mind of man, although it sounds a very fascinating subject, poses its own problems since it is a question of one mind studying the other. In order to study an imbalanced mind scientifically, it is imperative that the mind that takes up such study is in a reasonably balanced state. Such balance can only be achieved by a disciplined mind. To discipline a mind involves a total dedication to purpose. It is this dedication Hahnemann calls a *mission* of a true physician of the healing art.

Hahnemann was a man with a deep insight and had a thorough understanding of what ailed the physicians and the medical practice of his time. He was firmly convinced, that unless a mind is totally committed to action with a sense of devotion to the purpose, it could not function in balance.

It was necessary for the profession to realise this fact. This prompted him to call upon physicians to enter the profession only if they had the will to pick it up as a mission in life.

A great deal of controversy has been raised in the homoeopathic literature over the use of the word *mission* by Hahnemann in the *Organon of Medicine*. He is accused by his followers of lending a religious flavour to his scientific writings, a phenomenon which the science abhors. In the English translations of the original German editions of the *Organon of Medicine*, one could observe how the meaning of the word mission has been distorted by the translators, Wesselhoeft and Wheeler to convey what was acceptable to them by that term rather than what belonged to Hahnemann. A closer acquaintance with Hahnemann, however, through his biographies, easily convinces one of the fact, that he was not a man who believed in mincing words to give expression to his thoughts. This fact bears further evidence in his use of a plain and candid language to denounce the methods of allopathic practice prevalent in his days. What is even more convincing than that is the fact, that he looked upon his life as a divine mission and lived it so, setting at rest all speculation about his use of the term mission in his writings.

Instead of questioning the wisdom of Hahnemann's writings, the profession would do well to examine whether the physicians of modern times possess the right framework of mind that is prescribed for them, in order that it enables them to practise in a responsible manner. The modern society determines the success of a medical practice by the status symbols that have been attached to it. The aim of a physician has thus got divided between the objects that acquire him a recognition in the society and the object of his profession to which he is morally bound. This dilemma needs early resolution if the avowed objective of establishing a happy and healthy humanity were to come true. The only way it can be remedied is by the physicians extricating themselves from the prevailing situation and taking an objective look at themselves comparing their actions with the eternal standard of *truth, goodness and beauty*, and by regulating them restore the lost balance, so that, they truly live their lives for the higher purposes of existence.

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