



The Concept of Health as Advocated by Mahatma Gandhiji

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Today, health has become a major concern. Everywhere we turn around, whether rich or poor, illiterate or literate all are suffering with many illnesses of physical, mental, social and spiritual origin. Day-by-day restlessness & suffering is increasing in spite of so many researches, hospitals, doctors, technological excellences, newer drugs etc. In this situation, it becomes quite clear and evident that our approach to remedy is lopsided because we are trying to treat without finding remedy to the cause. More efforts and money, are focussed towards suppressing the causative factors and treat or care only the symptoms or superficially, and due to which the seed of illness tries to emerge in different forms.

Gandhiji was great advocator of Nature Cure and he believed in treating the cause rather than treating merely the symptoms. He said, 'I am now trying to evolve a system of Nature Cure suited to the millions of India's poor. I try to confine myself to the propagation of such cure as it is derivable from the use of earth, water, light, air and the great void. This naturally leads man to know that the sovereign cure of all ills is the recitation from the heart of the name of God' (Harijan 15-6-1967)

Gandhiji got influenced by the book 'Return to Nature' by Adolf Just and he experimented on himself and his family member, before he could write on the issues of Health and Nature Cure in elaborate. He was a scientist, a visionary and a humanist, who always thought more on practical aspects of health pertaining to population of India. He had the holistic concept of health and said 'Nature Cure means a change for the better in one's outlook on life itself. It means regulation of one's life in accordance with the laws of health. It is not a matter of taking free medicine from the hospital or for fees. A man who takes free treatment from the hospital accepts charity. The man who accepts Nature Cure never begs. Self help enhances respect. He takes step to cure himself by eliminating poisons from the system and takes precautions



against falling ill in future. Right diet and balanced diet are necessary. Today our villages are as bankrupt as we are ourselves to produce enough vegetables, fruits and milk in the villages as an essential part of the Nature Cure scheme. Time spent on this should not be considered as waste. It is bound to benefit all the villages and ultimately the whole of India (Harijan 4-6-46).

His principles and understanding of Life & Health were more practical and what he advocated for himself and advised were applied aspect of the eternal truth of living and living with physical, social, mental and spiritual health. Today, we talk of life style disorders and modification of life style to treat the diseases, which were way back adopted, advocated and advised as the principles of Nature Cure by Gandhiji in much more practical way relating to urban and rural population of India. He said, 'Nature Cure treatment means that treatment which befits man. By man is meant not merely as an animal, but as a creative possessing in addition to his body both mind and soul'. (Harijan 3-3-46)

Naturopathy is the system of healing science stimulating the body's inherent power to regain the health with the help of five great elements of nature namely - Earth, water Air, Fire and Ether. It is described as 'Drugless Healing' Gandhiji did not advocate any drugs for his treatment nor advised. Drugs, which are not only costly but also has lot of side-effects. Drugs are more dangerous than disease itself because it creates newer disease. The modern medicine has already recognized the iatrogenic disorders i.e. the diseases caused due to the abuse and misuse of medicine and medical field.

Naturopathy and Yoga is drugless system of medicine and a way of life. The major aspects of health is disease prevention, rehabilitation and health promotion. If this aspects are given more importance, number of diseases can be reduced. The cure or management can become more quicker, easier, cost-effective and less suffering. Hence, Gandhiji strongly believed that Nature Cure is safer, cheaper and best suitable to Indian socio-economic and geographical conditions.

Gaining health is a dynamic process, and pro-active in nature. Today, there is too much dependency on drugs and doctors, knowing the bitter truth that health cannot be purchased and disease cannot be sold. If, it were so all the rich would have been healthy and poor would have perished. But, nature brings balancing act and tries to teach people by giving minor jolts in form of acute disease to correct the living habits and if the man does not understand this simple basic concept or truth, he has to undergo major suffering not only at the individual level but to other mankind and Nature as a whole. Hence, to gain health Nature Cure believes the concept of unity of disease and unity of cure i.e. the cause of diseases is accumulation of toxins due to faulty life-style in all walks of life and violation of natural laws of Nature and to get the cure, correction of faulty life-style and return to Nature and to obey the Nature's Law. So, all the treatments are focussed to achieve this universal principle, which is eternal. While treating the diseases, all the treatment modalities aid the body and mind to eliminate the unwanted, unutilized, un-eliminated toxic material. In other words, the accumulation of foreign matter is the disease and elimination of foreign matter is the cure. Mahatma Gandhi has rightly said,



'Nature Cure has been a passion with me ever since my childhood. To serve the cause of Nature Cure has been the dream of my life. 999 cases out of 1000 can be brought round by a means of regulated diet, water, air, sun and earth treatments and similar house hold remedies'

Gandhiji has dealt in great details the concept of diet, food and fasting to urban and rural population. He fasted many times for political reason and also fasting for ill health reason and regained healthy for himself and for his kith and kins. He says that fasting is very beneficial in constipation, anaemia, feverish condition, indigestion, headache, rheumatic, gout, depression etc. He said, it is my conviction that the body gets rid of many of its impurities'. He advocated vegetarianism and has advised various natural organic foods like gur, groundnuts, soya products, green leafy vegetables, unpolished rice, whole wheat etc.) to compensate the nutritional depletion in the rural population. He had great vision of ecological balance and our environment. He advised natural manure and its usefulness and cost-effectiveness to bring good health to the human beings. According to Gandhiji'.... . Health means body ease. He is a healthy man whose body is free from all disease; he carries on his normal activities without fatigue. Such a man should be able with ease to walk ten to twelve miles a day and perform ordinary physical labour without getting tired. He can digest ordinary simple food - his mind and his senses are in state of harmony and poise'.

Gandhiji, to regain health believed in the efficacy of hydrotherapy. He advocated, Kuhne's - hip bath, sitz bath, and other packs - abdominal, full wet sheet packs etc. and also advocated mud treatments, which had equal benefits and much more in many cases, like mud poultice had and extraordinary therapeutic values. He even applied the mud poultice to his sons fractured arm.

He spoke on the moral consequences of food and hence was strongly against tobacco, opium, alcohol, which would ruin one physically, mentally, intellectually and economically. His concept of health-self-sufficiency through nature cure prayer, Ramanama would bring physical, mental and social health also, spiritual health contributing to the overall comprehensive gaining of health and maintaining it for long time.

Even to his day 80% of our population is not able to get the medical aid and I feel that this cannot be achieved unless, the very concept and approach of achieving health as defined and advocated according to what, Gandhiji as a visionary has advised and advocated. Health is a matter of cultivating and culturing all the good things pertaining to our socio-geographical and economic conditions and empowering each individual to achieve that whether it is rural or urban population. Now, it is enough by aping the West, is like trying to fit ourselves into others garb, which is not our true identity. Let us first uphold our values, our tradition, our needs and understand the ground reality and work towards these goals to be in peace and health. More and more research work in this regard of our system of medicine can be conducted so that newer perspectives, techniques and applications can emerge to empower our people to be healthy.

