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Nature Cure : Onwards, (by Mahatma Gandhi)

This is my India.

The number of patients at Uruli Kanchan increased from 30 to 43 on the third day, "This is good," remarked Gandhiji, "because it shows that those who need Nature Cure treatment are coming forward to avail themselves of it." If the work proceeded according to plan, he explained at the evening prayer gathering, he intended to stay for at least four months in the year in their midst. During his absence his colleagues would continue to direct and guide them according to his instructions. "The practice of nature cure does not require high academic qualifications or much erudition. Simplicity is the essence of universality. Nothing that is meant for the benefit of the millions requires much erudition. The latter can be acquired only by the few and therefore can benefit the rich only. But India lives in her seven lakhs of villages—obscure tiny, out-of-the-way villages, where the population in some cases hardly exceeds a few hundred, very often not even a few score. I would like to go and settle down in some such village. That is real India, my India, for which I live. You cannot take to these humble people the paraphernalia of highly qualified doctors and hospital equipment. In simple natural remedies and *Ramanam* lies their only hope.

He had been told that there was hardly any disease in Uruli. Probably what was

meant was that no epidemic was prevalent, that being the popular conception of disease. But from the cases that had come to him during the last two days it was clear that ill health there was in plenty in Uruli. "If you do as I ask you to," he told the villagers, "Uruli will become an ideal village, to see which people will come from far."

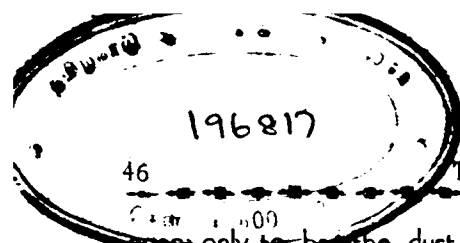
He then proceeded to give them his first discourse on Nature Cure principles. The following is its gist.

Nature-cure expounded.

"Man's physical body is composed of five natural elements, i.e., air, water, earth, fire or *tejas* (the energizing principle) and ether (space). The soul quickens it.

"The most essential of these is air. Man can live without food for several weeks without water for some time, but without air he cannot live for more than a few minutes. God has therefore made air universally available. Shortages of food or water there may be at times but of air never. In spite of it we foolishly deprive ourselves of God's blessing of fresh and pure air by sleeping within doors with doors and windows shut. One may shut the doors and windows if he is afraid of thieves at night. But why should one shut oneself up?

"To get fresh air, one must sleep in the open. But it is no good sleeping in the



32
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46

THE INDIAN NATUROPATH

not only to breathe dust and dirt-laden air. The place where you sleep must be free from both. Some people cover their faces as a protection against dust and cold. It is a remedy worse than the disease. Then there is the evil habit of breathing through the mouth. Mouth is the organ of digestion. It is not the organ of breathing. The air passing through the nasal passages is filtered and purified and at the same time warmed up before it enters the lungs.

"Anyone who fouls the air by spitting about carelessly, throwing refuse and rubbish or otherwise dirtying the ground, sins against man and nature. Man's body is the temple of God. Anyone who fouls the air that is to enter that temple desecrates it. He takes the name of *Rama* in vain."

In the end he warned them that they should be prepared to find in him a hard taskmaster. If he stayed in their midst he would neither spare himself nor them. He would visit their homes, inspect their streets, their drainage, their kitchens, their latrines. He would tolerate neither dust nor dirt anywhere.

Efficacy of 'Ramnam'

Speaking after prayers, Mahatma Gandhi explained the conditions under which 'Ramnam' could become an effective remedy for the three-fold malady—physical, mental and spiritual—to which man was subject. But, for that, it had to come from the heart.

People did not mind, Gandhiji added, going to the ends of the earth to find a cure for their physical ailments which were after all much less important than mental or spiritual ones. Man's physical being was after all perishable. It could not, by its very nature, last for ever. And yet men made a fetish of it while neglecting the mortal spirit within. A man who believed in Ramnam would not make a fetish of his body but regard it as means

for serving God and for making it into a fit instrument for that purpose Ramnam was the sovereign means. It might even take ages. But it was worth while to make the effort. Success, however, would depend on the grace of God.

Ramnam, added Mahatma Gandhi, would not come from the heart unless one had cultivated the virtues of truth, honesty and purity within and without. Every day at the evening prayers they repeated slokas describing the man with a steadfast intellect. Every one of them, he said, could become a *Sihita Pragna*—man with steadfast intellect if he kept his senses under perfect discipline, and allowed himself recreation only to sustain life for service. If one had no control over one's thoughts, if one did not mind sleeping in a hole, for instance, and breathing foul air or drinking dirty water, his recitation of Ramnam was in vain.

That, however, did not mean that one should give up reciting Ramnam on the ground that one had not the requisite purity. Recitation of Ramnam was also as a means for acquiring purity. In the case of a man who repeated Ramnam from the heart, discipline and self-control became natural. Observance of the rules of health and hygiene became second nature. His life would run in an even course. He would never want to hurt anyone. To suffer in order to relieve others' suffering would become part of his nature and fill him with an ineffable and perennial joy. Let them therefore continue to preserve and ceaselessly repeat Ramanam during all their waking hours. Ultimately, it would remain with them even during their sleep and God's grace would then fill their life with perfect health of body, mind and spirit.

Nature-cure in Kanchangaon

I settled down and started work in Uruli Kanchan in response to the invitation of

THE INDIAN NATUROPATH

47

the inhabitants there in the hope of making it a model nature cure centre for the villages of India. The people of the village had promised their co-operation. They were to have provided the land and erect buildings on it. But that has not yet materialized. They have given the money. But that is not enough for buying land and buildings. They have to find the land and to erect the buildings on it. Their active interest in it is more important than mere monetary aid.

According to the reports received from co-workers there, the inhabitants of Kanchangaon have begun to understand and appreciate nature cure. And the workers have developed such self-confidence that they won't mind, if I do not return there before June. They say that the people are co-operating with them so wholeheartedly that they can well afford to wait till I descend from Mahabaleshwar and panch-geni at the end of the warm season. All this has filled me with hope.

Nature cure consists of two parts. Firstly, to cure diseases by taking the name of God or *Ramanama* and secondly, to prevent illness by the inculcation of right and hygienic living. The report from the village says that the inhabitants are co-operating with them in keeping the village clean. I hold that where the rules of personal, domestic and public sanitation are strictly observed and due care is taken in the matter of diet and exercise, there should be no occasion for illness or disease. Where there is absolute purity, inner and outer, illness becomes impossible. If the village people could but understand this, they would not need doctors, *hakims* or *vaidyas*.

In Kanchangaon there are hardly any cows. That is unfortunate. There are some she buffaloes. But all the evidence that has come to me so far shows that buffalo's milk is no match for cow's in the

health-giving quality. The *vaidyas* specially recommend cow's milk for patients. I, therefore, hope that the people of Uruli Kanchan will keep a herd of cows to insure a supply of fresh clean cow's milk to all. Milk is an absolute necessity for health.

Then, the sooner the buildings are erected the better. In the first place, it is a question as to how long we ought to go on using Shri Datar's bungalow. Secondly, and that is more important, so long as there is not adequate housing accommodation, proper treatment of patients is not possible. Accommodation for indoor patients is a necessity, I shall always hope that Kanchangaon will become an ideal village. Nature cure implies an ideal mode of life and that in its turn presupposes ideal living conditions in towns and villages. The name of God is, of course, the hub round which the nature cure system revolves.

Nature-cure for the poor

Q. Is not a cruel joke to ask the poor villager to live on orange juice when he cannot afford even ordinary diet? He has to work throughout the day to feed his wife and children. His land and his children mean more to him than life itself. Nature cure is meant for the rich who have plenty of money and time at their disposal.

If you really wish to serve the villagers through nature cure, you should see that the right type of nature cure homes are started everywhere. At these homes the patients should get free food, clothing and bedding. And, if the patient happens to be a wage earner, arrangements should be made to support his family.

You have said nature cure means re-orientation of the way of living. Is it not necessary that education in that direction should form a necessary part of nature cure treatment?

A. The question betrays the correspon-

dent's ignorance. He has not taken the trouble to read carefully what I have written on the subject. Nature cure implies that the treatment should be the cheapest and the simplest possible. The ideal is that such treatment should be carried out in the villages. The villagers should be able to provide the necessary means and equipment. What cannot be had in the villages should be procured. Nature cure does mean 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 the 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 self-respect. He takes steps to cure himself by eliminating poisons from the system and takes precautions against falling ill in the future.

The central future of nature cure treatment is *Ramanama*. But it must come from the heart, if it is to be a remedy for all one's ailments.

Organge juice is not an essential part of nature cure treatment. 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, is an essential part of the nature cure scheme. Time spent on this should not be considered a waste. It is bound to benefit all the villagers and ultimately the whole of India.

It is true that nature cure homes of the right type should be opened in the villages and the cities. God willing, this will be done. The individual should rest content by doing his own duty leaving the rest to God.

Dr. Mehta's Institution.

I have received several questions about Dr. Dinshah Mehta's institution. Two of

"In order to make the institution more scientific, more modern and more useful for the public, is it not desirable that some capable enthusiastic nature cure men or men should be sent abroad for higher studies in nature cure? Would not such experts on their return evolve a system of nature cure suitable for our country and enable it to become popular and stand on its own feet?"

"You want a simple and cheap method of nature cure for our villages. Can the methods described by Kuhne, Just and Kneip etc. serve that purpose? Can these methods be useful and suitable for village work?"

The clinic at Poona could not serve the purpose of village nature cure in the opinion of the Trustees. Therefore, it was closed down and an experiment in village nature cure started at Uruli Kanchan. There the work is going on satisfactorily, though on a small scale. There is nothing there worth seeing as yet. Even land has not been bought and no buildings have been built.

Now let us take the main question. The tendency of looking to the West in order to make progress in whatever we do, should be checked. If we have to go to the West to learn nature cure, it cannot be of much use to India. Nature cure is a thing which everyone can practise in the home. The advice of nature cure experts should not be necessary for all time. It is such a simple thing that everyone can learn it. If we have to go to Europe to learn to recite *Ramanama*, it simply will not do. *Ramanama* is the very foundation of nature cure of my conception. Nor should it be necessary to go across the seas in order to learn the use of earth, water, ether, sun and air. This is self-evident. Whatever other knowledge is required in the direction can be had in our villages. For instance, if herbs are used,

they are worth noticing. They are given below:

they must be village herbs. *Ayurveda* teachers know all about them. If some *Ayurvedic* physicians are scoundrels, they cannot become good men and servants of the people by going abroad. The knowledge of anatomy and physiology has come from the West. It is very useful and necessary for all physicians. But there are plenty of means of learning it in our own country. In short, whatever useful contribution to knowledge has been made by the West, it has reached everywhere and can be learnt everywhere. I might add here that the knowledge of anatomy and physiology is not essential for learning nature cure.

The writings of Kuhne, Just and Father Kneip, are simple, popular and useful for all. It is our duty to read them. Practically every nature cure physician knows something about them. Nature cure has not been taken to the villages so far. We have not thought deeply and no one has thought of it in terms of the millions. This is just the beginning. No one can say where we shall stand in the end. As in all great and good enterprises, sacrifice and dedication are required to make this successful. Instead of looking up to the West, we should turn the searchlight inwards.

Ayurveda and Nature-cure

Vaidya Vallabharam, Professor of Ayurveda and Vansapati Sastra writes:—

"By combining Ayurveda with allopathy the essentials of the former science have been almost destroyed. Cure through Ayurveda is based on the five elements. Misuse of air will cause wind, that of fire bile, of water phlegm. The progress of Ayurveda depends on its recognition of these basic factors in disease. It holds

that for the cure of such complaints as mentioned above, the remedy lies in the proper use of air, light and water. The religious factor must be there too in order scrupulously to observe the laws of nature. Pathya (diet cure) is a scientific term of the greatest importance in Ayurveda. Its real meaning is that freedom from disease depends on a proper observance of the laws of nature.

"Vagbhat says:

"Without strict dieting of what use is medicine? With strict dieting why any other medicine?"

I have no doubt whatsoever that the spread of *Ramanama* and pure living are the best and cheapest preventives of disease. The tragedy is that doctors, hakims and vaidyas do not make use of *Ramanama* as the sovereign of cures. There is no place given to it in current Ayurvedic literature except it be in the shape of a charm which will drive people further into the well of superstition. *Ramanama* has in fact no connection with superstition. It is nature's supreme law. Who ever observes it is free from disease and vice versa. The same law which keeps one free from disease applies also to its cure. An apt question is as to why a man who recites *Ramanama* regularly and leads a pure life should ever fall ill. Man is by nature imperfect. A thoughtful man strives after perfection, but never attains it. He stumbles on the way, however, unwittingly. The whole of God's law is embodied in a pure life. The first thing is to realise one's limitations. It should be obvious that the moment one transgresses those limits one falls ill. Thus a balanced diet eaten in accordance with needs gives one freedom from disease. How is one to know what is the proper diet for one? Many such enigmas can be imagined. The purport of it all is that everyone should be his own doctor and find

out his limitations. The man who does so will surely live up to 125.

Vaidya Vallabharam asks whether well known home drugs and condiments can be included in nature cure. Doctor friends claim that they do nothing more than investigating the laws and act accordingly and that therefore they are the best nature cure men. Everything can be explained away in this manner. All I want to say is that anything more than Ramanama is really contrary to true nature cure. The more one recedes from this central principle the farther away one goes from nature cure. Following this line of thought I limit nature cure to the use of the five elements. But

a Vaidya who goes beyond this and uses such herbs as grow or can be grown in his neighbourhood purely for service of the sick and not for money may claim to be a nature cure man. But where are such Vaidyas to be found? To day most of them are engaged in making money. They do no research work and it is because of their greed and mental laziness that the science of Ayurveda is at a lower ebb. Instead of admitting their own weakness they throw the blame on government and public men. Government is powerless to help those who through their own fault become helpless and thereby drag the name of Ayurveda in the mud.

Vanaspathi and Ghee (By M. K. Gandhi)

Sardar Sir Datar Singh has been putting up a fight on behalf of the Cow in India. The cow includes the buffalo. In that case both can live. If the buffalo includes the cow then both die. "The cow is the mother of prosperity." To understand how this is so, the reader should see Shri Satish Chandra Das Gupta's two instructive volumes. * Here I want to confine myself to ghee which is in danger of being swamped by VANASPATI, as the so-called vegetable ghee is called. In reality ghee is pure animal product. One thoughtlessly uses the expression vegetable ghee or VANASPATHI, but it is a contradiction in terms. Sardar Datar Singh has shown in a considered note that the sale of VANASPATI has risen from 26,000 tons in 1937 to 137,000 tons in 1945, i.e., it has increased more than 400 per cent, during seven years. PARI PASSU the ghee industry has declined. Those who would study the whole note should procure a copy from Sardar Datar Singh or the Goseva Sangh in

Wardha. I condense below the Sardar's conclusions:

1. VANASPATI as an article of diet is a very poor substitute for ghee. It not only lacks absorption by the human system, but has no vitamin potency.
2. Due to great margin of profit in this industry, it has developed from 26 thousand tons per annum in 1937 to 105 thousand tons in 1943 and there are proposals afoot to at least double this production in the near future.
3. Due to its similarity with ghee in texture and flavour, most of it is being used as an adulterant or is passed off as genuine ghee and is therefore a great menace to ghee.
4. The ghee industry is India's greatest cottage industry involving production of 23,000,000 maunds of ghee per annum at a cost of one hundred crores of rupees.
5. The destruction of the ghee industry will not only adversely affect the wel-

* The Cow in India' Vol. I Rs. 10. Vol II Rs. 7 both together Rs. 16. Postage Rs. 1-9-0. Can be had from the office of this paper or Khadi Pratishthan, Solapur, Calcutta.

fare of the cultivators, but it will have a very deleterious effect on the cattle industry upon which the prosperity of the whole nation directly depends.

In order to overcome the difficulties explained above, the following remedial measures are suggested:

1. If due to some reasons the Government cannot actually ban the manufacture altogether of VANASPATI, it must at least be brought under strict control immediately.
2. All manufacturers, and wholesale and retail dealers of VANASPATI should be licensed. Such persons should not be permitted to trade in or stock ghee on their premises.
3. It should be made compulsory to colour all VANASPATI, at the source of its manufacture in India and to colour all such imported product immediately on its landing at an Indian port. Manufacturers must mix ten per cent of till oil with VANASPATI. The advantage of this would be that if pure ghee is adulterated with VANASPATI containing 10% till oil, the detection will become extremely simple. The presence of till oil can be most easily detected by well-known chemical reactions.
4. The addition of synthetic essences to give VANASPATI a semblance of ghee should be prohibited.
5. Persons selling food products in the preparation of which they use VANASPATI should be required, under marketing law, to

display a sign to that effect. The presence of VANASPATI on the premises not displaying the sign should be made an offence under law. This will eradicate the evil of HALWAIS and confectioners using VANASPATI for their preparations and passing them off as made from genuine ghee.

6. VANASPATI should not be allowed to be marketed in packages of the same pattern as used for packing ghee and all packages containing VANASPATI should be distinctly labelled.

7. VANASPATI should not be allowed to go in the market under names such as 'VEGETABLE GHEE' or 'VANASPATI GHEE' or any other name which is apt to deceive the customers as to its real origin of composition.

It is clear that the mischief arises principally from the greed of the very persons who worship the cow. VANASPATI is wholly superfluous. Oils may be refined of injurious property, but they do not need to be solidified nor need they be made to look like ghee. An honest manufacturer will not stoop to counterfeits. The market is flooded with them. Counterfeit coins are heavily punishable. Why not counterfeit ghee, since the genuine article is much more precious than coins? But the sovereign remedy lies in all round honesty among dealers who are in a hurry to become rich even at the cost of the health of the nation.

An experiment in National Diet (By Pyarelal)

A striking experiment was carried out in Denmark in the last year of the Great War which has a moral for us in the present food crisis. The Danes as a people were, in the first instance, largely lacto-vegetarian in their diet. Then about 1870-1880 American wheat and barley from the virgin

soil of the prairies began to pour in and forced the Danes to change their agricultural methods quickly. They began to raise pigs and poultry and became exporters of eggs and bacon and butter to England. They also became big eaters of meat and eggs themselves.

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The blockade following the entry of the United States into the war created a serious situation for the Danes. Denmark had a population of 35,00,000 human beings and 50,00,000 domestic animals. Grain and fodder used to come from America. The sudden stoppage of the American imports created an acute shortage of these articles. Professor Mikkel Hindhede, Superintendent of the State Institute of Food Research, was appointed Food Adviser to the Danish Government to deal with the crisis. The question which he was called upon to decide was this. So far the pigs had provided ham and bacon for the English as well as the Danes. Would it be wise in this crisis to get rid of the pigs and let men eat the grain which otherwise the pigs would eat? Hindhede decided it would be wise and so some four-fifths of the pigs and about one sixth of the cattle were killed. The pigs gone, the bran which was fed to them was set free and was utilized for making whole meal bread with the entire coarse bran incorporated. This was the celebrated Kliebroat which was made official for the whole country. In addition to it the Danes ate porridge, green vegetables, milk, butter and fruit. "No grain or potatoes were allowed for distillation of spirits, so there were no spirits". Half the previous quantity of beer was permitted. Only people on the farms got meat. The people in the cities, about 40 per cent of the population got very little meat. Only the rich could afford beef.

The food regulations were begun in March 1917, and were made stringent from October 1917 to October 1918.

An amazing result followed from the

enforcement of this national diet. Death rate which had been 12.5 in 1913-14 now fell to 10.4 per thousand "which is the lowest mortality figure that has been registered in any European country at any time" (Hindhede). To express the results in another way, taking the average from 1906 to 1916 as 160, in the October to October year it was 66. "Even in men over 65 the figure fell to 76."

Before the fiasco the Danes ate fine meal bread and whole meal bread. Hindhede made them eat only whole meal bread with extra bran. Its proportions were given out as 67% rye, 21% oats and 12% bran.

"Except for the bran which added vegetable meat for those who were animally meatless or meat short," observes Hindhede, "this bread was the bread which the Danes used to eat before the invasion of American wheat," and which had been the "national bread of Denmark for centuries."

Hindhede attributed the remarkable improvement in the national health of the Danes to (1) less meat, (2) less alcohol. "The bran largely filled the gap of the scanty or absent meat, bran having a good proportion of vegetable meat protein." He regarded his experiment as a "triumph of his previous teaching." "The reader knows," he wrote in Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift of March 1920, "how sharply I have emphasized the advantages of a lacto-vegetarian diet. I am not in principle a vegetarian but I believe I have shown that a diet containing a large amount of meat and eggs is dangerous to health."

