

## CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE OF GANDHIAN THOUGHTS ON NATUROPATHY

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### ABSTRACT

Gandhiji was a firm believer of Naturopathy. He not only did several experiments of Naturopathy upon him and his family but also wrote illustratively in favor of Naturopathy. His writings on Naturopathy are popular among the followers of Naturopathy. He was so convinced with Nature Cure that he included Nature Cure (*Kudarati Chikitsa*) in his constructive programs and subsequently established a Nature Cure Ashram at Urulikanchan, Pune, Maharashtra. His views on Naturopathy were based on his practical experiences. He wanted to make the people self sufficient in health matters. He was of the view that to fall ill should be a matter of shame for anyone.

This paper elaborates the references from Gandhiji's writing pertaining to naturopathy and justifies these thoughts for their significance in recent perspectives.

Keywords: Naturopathy, *Kudarati Chikitsa*, Nature Cure

### Introduction:

Gandhiji, the father of our nation was a firm believer of Naturopathy. He was convinced that for good health, one has to live according to the law of nature in regard to diet, fresh air, exercise, clean surroundings and a pure heart. He further believes that human body, mind and spirit could be maintained in a state of perfect health by observance of simple rules.

When Gandhiji was in South Africa he used to take some medicines because of his digestive problems. During these days he was handed over Just's book called 'Return to Nature' by Mr. Polak. This book was about making increased usage of mud in medicine. Gandhiji got impressed by the book and started taking mud pack and other water treatments with change in food pattern as advised and found good results. It convinced him to a great extent. After coming back to India, he started doing experiments with Nature Cure on his family members and the residents of the ashram which convinced him a lot.<sup>1</sup>

Rastogi (2008) states that 'Gandhiji had a passion to tendering care to the sick and poor. He valued life close to nature for its simplicity and evolved and practiced simple rules of health. He had almost a religious faith in vegetarianism which led him to carry out dietetic reform based on pragmatic result obtained from personal experiments. He was tremendously influenced by the writings of Dr. Kuhne on Nature Cure. He believed that human body, mind and spirit could be maintained in a state of perfect health by observance of simple rules. He attempted to discover causes of ordinary ill health and improvised simple remedies of Nature Cure.'<sup>2</sup>

Gandhiji was having very clear thoughts in his mind regarding the efficacy of Naturopathy in health matters. His observations were based on his personal experiences. He recognized Late Shri Vegiraju Krishnamraju, one of the pioneers of Naturopathy, as a genuine Naturopath and used to seek his medical advice and also sent some patients to his Nature Cure Hospital at Bhimavaram in Andhra Pradesh for treatment.<sup>3</sup> Later he used to stay at the 'Nature Cure Clinic' of Dr. Dinshaw Mehta in Pune during 1934 to 1944. Now it is known as 'Bapu Bhavan' having 'National Institute of Naturopathy' in it. He was so convinced with Nature Cure that he included Nature Cure (*Kudarati Chikitsa*) in his constructive programs and visited Urlikanchan on 22.3.1946 with Dr. Dinshaw Mehta and others to establish a Nature Cure Ashram at Uruli, Pune, Maharashtra. He stayed there up to 30.3.1946, guided some patients and handed over the responsibility of Ashram to Shri Balkova Bhave and others.<sup>(1,6)</sup>

Gandhiji had written several articles in favor of Naturopathy which were published in weeklies - the Young India and the Harijan, which later on compiled in books 'Key to Health' and 'Nature Cure'. He also authored books 'Diet and Diet Reform' and 'Ram Nama'. These books are quite popular in the followers of Naturopathy. With his articles he conveyed the message to people that 'To fall ill should be a matter of shame for anyone. Illness implies some error or other. He whose body and mind are perfectly sound should never suffer from illness.'<sup>4</sup>

He emphasized that 'Nature Cure means a change for the better in one's out look 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 self respect. He takes steps to cure himself by eliminating poisons from the system and takes precautions against falling ill in the future' <sup>5</sup>

According to Gandhiji 'The central feature of Nature Cure treatment is *Ram nama*. But it must come from the heart. Right diet and balanced diet are also 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. <sup>6</sup>

Gandhiji had immense faith in Nature Cure. He always believed that this is the only system which is useful in a country like India. He wanted to make the people self sufficient in health matters. He was of the view that if we have to go the west to learn Nature Cure, it can not be of much use to India. Nature Cure is a thing which every one can practice in the home. <sup>7</sup>

The approach of Gandhiji towards Nature Cure was practical. He touched the basic things and the mistakes we do in our daily life. For example he says, 'To get fresh air, one must sleep in the open. But it is not good sleeping in the open only to breathe dust and dirt-laden air. The place where you sleep must be free from both. Some people cover their faces as protection against dust and coal. It is a remedy worse than the disease. Then, there is the evil habit of breathing through the mouth. Mouth is the organ of ingestion. 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. <sup>8</sup>

'Any one 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. Any one who fouls the air that is to enter that temple desecrates it. He takes the name of *Ram* in vain'. <sup>9</sup>

The observations made decades ago by Gandhiji are highly important now a days as we are not using the fresh air but avoid it and unaware regarding the basic rules of hygiene despite of so called advancement. In fact we have developed a tendency of avoiding the noble touch of *panchamahabhutas* i.e. Earth, Water, Akash, Sun, Air.

As far as the food is concerned Gandhiji started his dietetic experiments very early, even when he was an eighteen years old student. 'He experimented with ovens, vessels for cooking, quantity of water to be used, steaming, boiling, baking, determining what ingredients are to be used or avoided in cooking, various ways of making bread'. His experiments were conducted with a view to finding out the most wholesome food and the wisest way of preparing it, all the time keeping in mind the poverty of our people and their slender resources.'<sup>10</sup>

He always advocated balanced diet with proper mastication. In his book 'Key to Health' he has covered almost all the topics related to human body, food, condiments, intoxicants, *brahamacharya* and *panchamahabhutas*. Regarding food he says, 'we are in the habit of dipping each morsel of the *chapati* in vegetable or *dal* gravy before eating it. The result is that most people swallow their food without proper mastication which is an important step in the process of digestion, especially that of starch. Digestion of starch begins on its coming into contact with saliva in the mouth. Mastication ensures a thorough mixing of food with saliva. Therefore starchy foods should be eaten in a relatively dry form, which results in a greater flow of saliva and also necessitates their thorough mastication'.<sup>11</sup>

The description given above is more important now a days as we are not following the basic rules of taking food resulting in deprived state of health.

He had tremendous faith in *Ram Nama*. He says that, 'Nature Cure treatment means that treatment which befits man. By 'man' is meant not merely man as an animal, but as a creature possessing, in addition to his body, both mind and soul. For such a being *Ram nama* is the truest Nature Cure treatment. It is an unfailing remedy. The expression *Rama bana* or infallible cure is derived from it. Nature, too, indicates that for man it is the worthy remedy. No matter what the ailment from which a man may be suffering, recitation of *Ram nama* from the heart is the sure cure. God has many names. Each person can choose the name that appeals most to him. Ishwara, Allah, Khuda, God mean the same. But the recitation must not be parrot-like, it must be born of faith of which endeavour will be some evidence. What should the endeavour consist of? Man should seek out and be content to confine the means of cure to the five elements of which the body is composed, i.e., earth, water, akash, sun and air. Of course, *Ram nama* must be the invariable accompaniment. If in spite of this, death supervenes, we may not mind. On the contrary, it should be welcomed. Science has not so far discovered any recipe for making the body immortal. Immortality is an attribute of the soul. That is certainly imperishable, but it is man's duty to try to express its purity.'<sup>12</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The views of Gandhiji are more significant now a day. Nature Cure should be simple, understandable and as easy that could be practiced at home. Nature Cure means simple and natural, not complicated and artificial. Unfortunately today Nature Cure has been converted in several complicated treatment procedures, which may not be essentially required for a patient. Moreover, it is becoming a costly affair now. The simplicity which was the identification of Nature Cure has been lost in today's hustle-bustle. The Nature Cure has become a status symbol now for a particular group of people which has gradually started creating distances between Nature Cure and a common man.

Not even this, the system of Nature Cure has been over loaded with various methods in the name of drugless system, which are not essentially a part of Nature Cure because these don't follow the fundamentals of Nature Cure.

Hence, this is the right time now for the Naturopathy institutions in country to take up the task of propagating Naturopathy system in true spirit and with a view to spread the real message of Gandhiji to make the people self sufficient in health matters. This is important because not only the cost of medicine is raising high and high but we have developed a tendency of avoiding the laws of health which ultimately leads to a diseased life.

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सारांश

## प्राकृतिक चिकित्सा पर गान्धीवादी विचारों की समकालीन सार्थकता

राजीव रस्तोगी

गान्धीजी प्राकृतिक चिकित्सा के एक दृढ़ विश्वासी थे। उन्होंने स्वयं और अपने परिवार पर न केवल प्राकृतिक चिकित्सा के अनेक प्रयोग किये अपितु प्राकृतिक चिकित्सा के समर्थन में उदाहरणसहित लिखा। प्राकृतिक चिकित्सा पर उनके लेख प्राकृतिक चिकित्सा के अनुयायियों में लोकप्रिय हैं। वह प्राकृतिक चिकित्सा में इतना विश्वास रखते थे कि उन्होंने अपने रचनात्मक कार्यक्रमों में प्राकृतिक चिकित्सा (कुदरती चिकित्सा) को सम्मिलित किया एवं साथ ही उरुलिकञ्चन, पुणे, महाराष्ट्र में प्राकृतिक चिकित्सा आश्रम स्थापित किया। प्राकृतिक चिकित्सा पर उनकी दृष्टि उनके प्रयोगात्मक अनुभव पर आधारित थी। वह जनता को स्वास्थ्य मामलों में स्वयं निर्भर बनाना चाहते थे। उनका यह मत था कि रुग्ण होना किसी के लिए भी शर्म का विषय होना चाहिए। यह लेख प्राकृतिक चिकित्सा से सम्बन्धित गान्धीजी के लेखों के सन्दर्भों का विस्तार से प्रतिपादन करता है एवं आधुनिक परिप्रेक्ष्य में इन विचारों को उनकी सार्थकता के लिए उचित सिद्ध करता है।