

**HEALTH FOR ALL  
A FACTUAL APPROACH WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO AFRO-ASIAN  
NATIONS**

**SHAHEED HAKIM MOHAMMED SAID**

At present the world population has been estimated as 4.76 billion, while by the end of the century it has been extrapolated to grow to 6.12 billion.

The present resources at our command and the plans which have been formulated for putting them into full use are not, it is being realized, sufficient to cope with the extension of health care for all; and this constitutes the greatest constraint in the promotion and expansion of medical facilities.

We are today faced with this ever-widening gap. On the one hand, there is the explosive population growth and on the other our limited resources. The present situation has given rise to a multitude of problems; the problems that demand our immediate attention are sociological, psychological and problem of health that follow from them. New diseases and novel ailments that have manifested themselves are the results of these factors.

Races and nations have had their differences, and the incompatibility aggravated by the unequal economic status of the advanced nations, is another factor that is spoiling the sit-

uation. As a result, the ethical content is also being vitiated. We thus have a vicious circle out of which it is becoming increasingly difficult to extricate ourselves. Men find themselves using tranquillizers, and turning to drinks and intoxicants, and unbridled use of sleeping pills and medicines as means of escape from reality.

This is the reason why, although researchers in biology, medicine and the ever-increasing pharmacopoeia have absorbed a considerable amount of our financial and material resources, they have almost failed to meet the challenge.

Most of the stress today is concentrated on synthetic drugs which, instead of redressing the situation, are complicating the issue. It is not difficult to guess from the present-day trends in synthetic drugs research the extent of material and financial resources they will require and how deleterious their effects in the long run will be.

The disparity of resources which obtains between the nations is reflected among the people of different races and cultures. This disparity will increase than decrease. Because of this inequality

amongst nations and within nations, it will have become virtually impossible for the developing nations to cease the use of the newer generation drugs, at least for most of its inhabitants. Is it then possible for us to visualize, in view of what is not mere guesswork based on distant scenario, that each and every citizen of our planet will have access to medicare by the end of the century?

It is our view that, in order to bring about a changeover in thinking, and in order to undertake a realistic appraisal of the situation, we should reorient our thinking towards the traditional system of medicine. We should make every effort to reconcile the different nations to our view-point, and to persuade them to accept at least a moiety of our lost heritage so that every attention is paid to the spiritual and psychological aspects of man and to arrange for his spiritual training.

We will thus be in a position to ameliorate the situation arising out of the present-day problems and, on the other hand, employ easily accessible resources to enforce corrective measures.

### **Political Turmoil**

The Alma Ata conference of WHO represents a milestone in the present-day situation. It adopted resolutions that are just egalitarian. WHO, from its headquarters at Geneva, enunciated the deliberations of this conference as HEALTH FOR ALL BY THE YEAR 2000. Although the slogan was rather overzealous, it was timely and needed attention. But we see that most nation of the world did not pay heed to it. Among the list of constraints that we are likely to draw up, we find that Afro-Asian countries have not pay heed to it that is its due, and have not accorded the place due to it. All that health has received is a secondary status, in fact, the last place.

My reading is that Afro-Asian countries are involved in political turmoil and adjustments. On the one hand, no government enjoys stability and, on the other, all political parties, instead of concentrating on social and welfare work, have got themselves involved in politicising, with one political party arrayed to the hilt to defeat the other. We have, at the other spectrum, nations who, in the attainment of materialistic goals, are trampling all ethical and human values. Then we have the really poor countries whose very existence seems a miracle.

### **Narcotics**

Gradually and imperceptibly during the last two decades the great problem of narcotics has raised its head. The history of narcotics is not new to human. It was even used as an instrument of political gain. But it is also equally true that narcotics have always been looked at with aversion, and its user have never gained any respectable status in society. In our society narcotics have become sources for quick money and affluence. What is most surprising, indeed, that the producers and suppliers of narcotics do it with remarkable nonchalance and indifference, while he who takes it either orally or intravenously, is not all conscious of how he is disgrading himself and the society. Any society that indulges in the taking of narcotics has sunk itself to the last depth of depravity. It is ofcourse a long tale as to why a society has gone down like this and why man, having forsaken his high status, has fallen so low. What can be said is, however, that such circumstances are generated when society is anxiety-ridden. With the celerity with which the circumstances are changing man finds himself helpless and tossed like flotsam on the sea of life, looking for comfort and peace, and, missing them, finding solace in narcotics. The easiest recipe for

tranquillity is intoxication and escape from the surroundings and aims of life. Narcotics are deliterious to health and make for the greatest constraint in the acheivement of goal of HEALTH FOR ALL. We have to find the solution to it, or else the coming decades will prove very trying.

### **Tranquillizers**

I cannot refrain at the moment referring to the drugs which have been brought to the fore by the multinationals at the great expense and constitute the showcase of their ingenuity. During the last five decades at least tranquillizers have attained dominant position in the treatment therapy. There have been occasions when voices were raised in America and other European countries against their indiscriminate use. Experts in their respective fields raised their voices agianst them in protest and tried to do all they could for the people to be chary of their use. They also sounded notes of warning to the medical profession. A considerable proportion of the medical profession itself criticized the use of tranquillizers, but all these cries of protest failed before persuasive influence of the major drug makers who went on manufacturing one such drug after another.

I have alluded to the fact that there exists record in history where there tranquillizers have been used for political gains. These political strategies have provided a leeway for the indiscriminate use of tranquillizers and their easily availibilty at the counter. Since the last two decades tranquillizers are being employed for the political purposes. I wish to make it plain before this sugust body of health scientists that tranquillizers are being used upon the people of Pakistan. This has all been done undera well through-out programme, and the tranquillizers

are available at all drug stores. I can state with confidence that during the past 25 years no prescription from a medical doctor is devoid of the so-called tranquillizing medicine.

### **Synthetic Drugs**

Since the time that man has been regarded as merely chunk of flesh, the role of the soul having been held in abeyance, there has taken place a revolution in the art of drug making. Likewise the negation of the idea that man is not a material being alone but exists together with the spirit or soul has brought about a revolution in man's thinking. The drugs presently dispensed to man are oblivious of the elements, humours and temperaments, or that the soul is at the very base of existence. The new concept of medicine has made germicidal and bactericidal actions as the basic goals of modern medicine. The indiscriminate use of antibiotics - the desire on the part of the patients to get well soon and keennes on the part of the physician to dispose off the case as soon as possible -- has almost destroyed the human body. If we are careful and honest with ourselves, we will find that HEALTH FOR ALL BY THE YEAR 2000 has another constraining factor -- the synthetic drugs. Their indiscriminate use has taken the west by storm and now every physician of Afro-Asia is being schooled in their use. Many of the synthetic drugs which are liberally exported to the Third World have been banned in their countries of origin.

### **Want of Human Love --Want to Respect**

When a human being is no longer human in the accepted sense, when narcotics have vitiated his character and person completely, and synthetic drugs have shattered his very being, man while being rendered devoid of this prudence, concurrently, came to be deprived of

of the sacred sentiments of mutual love and respect. The existence of the super powers' rivalry is unfortunate for man. Every major power has become law unto itself and is out to assert its hegemony over the weaker nations. Indeed, man's decline has had its birth when he was arrayed to subjugate the weaker nations. Man seems to have become free to overshadow his fellow-men. The whole world is a victim to this vexatious power game.

Powerful governments are all out to victimise the the weaker nations. Their honour and dignity is being trampled upon and debased. This is a miasmatic atmosphere where neither love has any place nor respect any sanctity. Can there be two opinions that this constitutes the greatest constraint in the achievement of the goal: HEALTH FOR ALL THE YEAR 2000?

### **Affluence and Poverty**

One of the serious problems confronted by the most nations today is the inequitable distribution of resources. This disparity has generated problems of health not only on individual but on collective basis as well.

Western countries endowed with a high degree of technology and affluence, undreamt hitherto, have taken to industries that would serve for their defence. But the surplus production of armaments and industrial goods has generated problems of its own, and a large majority of Afro-Asian countries have become their potential buyers. They have become the scene of rampant poverty which has been further aggra-

vated by the failure of economic systems operating in these countries and, very naturally, every aspect of culture and civic sense has come to be eroded. To add to this, political turmoil and the race for acquiring overnight prosperity and grabbing power present a cannibal-like drama. The unbridled supply of weaponry has made sorties and battles free for all. This also makes for a major constraint in HEALTH FOR ALL BY THE YEAR 2000.

I have tried to present a balanced and succinct picture, and to draw international attention towards factors which act as constraints in the realization of universal health. I must, however, however confess my inability to present a solution. Nevertheless I subscribe to a faith whose Apostle was the harbinger of peace and mercy. This religion considers it to be the greatest of sins to enslave man or to circumscribe his freedom.

The Renaissance in Europe, in its own particular way, had emphasized the dignity of man and the development of his personality. The wave of learning and discovery that inundated Tuscany via Spain bore the stamp of humanism. For the health of all person (body and soul) it is essential that each citizen and the society of which that citizen is a member should have before them the higher goals of life and in both thought and action should combine together to forge a united front. Every care should be exercised to see that his basic right should not be confined to a few classes or countries but be the heritage of all mankind. If there is correct understanding of this point, the clouds of danger may pass and humanity can breathe in peace again.