

# India's Possibilities of Self-Reliant in Medicine and Medicinal Research as Perceived by Mohendranath Dutt

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**Abstracts:** *Since the dawn of ancient civilization Indians have shown their genius in different spheres like science, philosophy, art-architecture, literature and likewise in medicine, we have also a long tradition. Our people have developed a model of medicine which had served the need of people. Now our world is passing through a pandemic (COVID 19). To get rid of this scientist throughout the world are trying their best to invent vaccines. They will reach a solution. Based on the present circumstance it is a tiny effort to evaluate Mohendranath Dutt's views on medicine, medical science, and India's possibility to serve mankind.*

**Keywords:** Pandemic, Hindu mode of medicine, Mohamedan mode of medicine, Modern European medicine, Unani, Ayurveda, Siddha, Yoga, Rishi.

The present world is passing through an unprecedented pandemic in the name of COVID-19. Researchers, Doctors, Scientists all over the world are searching for a way out from this pandemic with the invention of an effective vaccine. In the meantime, on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020, the US president regarded Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ), an Indian product medicine as a 'Game changer'. It is not certain that HCQ is successfully effective in the field of combating COVID-19. But as an anti-inflammatory drug HCQ is giving a sort of relief to the patients from fever. HCQ which is developed via hydroxylation from Chloroquine is a less toxic derivative of Chloroquine and Chloroquine is a more toxic derivative of quinine. But natural quinine is extracted from cinchona bark and India is full of herbs of that. Considering the present situation, it is a humble attempt to explore India's possibility to be self-reliant in the field of medicine and medical science as viewed by Mohendranath Dutt.

Mohendranath Dutt (1869-1956) is known in the socio-political life of Bengal as the younger brother of Swami Vivekananda. Besides, he was a thinker, philosopher, writer, and saint of contemporary Bengal.<sup>1</sup> He had an opportunity to enjoy Shri Ramakrishna's company and his preaching from his teenage.<sup>2</sup> He accompanied his elder brother abroad and recorded the events and lectures in several books authored by him. He explained different phenomena that took place in the life of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda with his rational thinking. He went to London in 1896 to study law and in the British Museum library studied various subjects with his great zeal.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter he traveled (1897-1902) different parts of the globe subsequently in India in quest of the meaning of life and this grand manifestation called 'Creation'. Being traveled in the different parts of the world he acquired direct knowledge of civilization that was developed in the different parts of the world. Based on his direct interaction he developed his thought process and means of suggestions to uplift our nation from the colonial lethargy and laziness with the help of our ancient knowledge and wisdom with modern thinking.<sup>4</sup> He had a thorough knowledge regarding many subjects which have been reflected through his writings in the form of books namely New Asia, Federated Asia, Rights of Mankind, Lecture of Education, Nation, National Wealth, and so on.

## Three Systems of Medicine

At present in India - three systems of medicine are in vogue. Firstly, the Hindu system of Medicine<sup>5</sup> which has got much influence in the country; Secondly, the Mohamedan system of Medicine<sup>6</sup> which was so much patronized by the emperor of Delhi; and Thirdly, the modern European system of Medicine, brought by the European merchants.<sup>7</sup>

In India, the Hindu system of medicine is considered one of the oldest medical systems in the world. Its efficacy is uncontested and unchallenged. But being an old system it is overshadowed by other systems. The Indian system is not called the science of medicine but of longevity Ayurveda, whereas other systems are called systems of medicine. This science of longevity of Hindus should be remodeled so that it would easily accessible to modern requirements. Its vitality and efficacy must be acknowledged.<sup>8</sup> Different modes of medicine were developed in the different parts of the world as per the climate and environmental conditions of the respective area. In cold and foggy region one sort of medication has developed and in the tropical region, another sort of medication has been developed. The diseases which are frequent in the tropical region are not as frequent as in the cold and foggy region. The European system was thought out in cold and foggy countries, whereas in the tropical regions the climate and diet are different. The medical systems of colder regions are not fit for men of tropical regions. European medicine was inefficacious in the treatment of tropical region diseases. For this reason, New Asia must develop a new system of medicinal planning according to the climate and habituation of diet. In that context, Mohendranath Dutt says "Mere imitation of the foreign system will be no good and will not develop the spirit and the advancement of Asian people. Only such portions of western medicines should be adopted which will agree with Asian temperament and constitution of mind."<sup>9</sup> The three modes of treatment have proved their efficiency in curing disease. For better efficacy, the systems should be blended.<sup>10</sup> Now an attempt should be made that students be taught in all the three different schools; and by the fusion of these schools, a new and modern Indian system of medicine will arise, and to revive this very high and noble idea and systems of the glorious past.<sup>11</sup>

Mohendranath Dutt had a firm conviction in our traditional medicine system which had been serving our people since the very ancient period and it has an immense value in the present world also. The Ancient *Rishis* researched the medical system as per the need and character of ailments of the country and built up a system suitable for their people. But in the later period due to the colonial influence, our system had been somewhat pale. He never denied the importance of western medical school but at the same time, he suggested regarding the revival of our system of medicine in the line of Hindu mode of medicine. Immediately after independence, the government of India took many initiatives to revive our pre-colonial medication system and established several research institutes in India, yet the western medication system is predominant in our country. We failed to make people convince about our ancient medication system. He regretted this. Not only that Mohendranath Dutt went further and suggested that "One necessary thing for new Asia is that annually once or twice a synod should be called where the exponents of different medical systems should meet together, discuss the points in their respective systems and by the fusion and mixing up of the three systems or rather selecting the best portions from the three systems, namely, the Hindu, the Unani and the European systems, develop a new Asia system which will be comprehensible and meet the requirements of Asian people."<sup>12</sup>

### **Knowledge of Medical Education to the Maximum**

Considering the value of medical education in India through the ages Mohendranath Dutt put forth a very effective suggestion regarding how to make the medical study comparatively cheap and more accessible to the largest section of the population in the country. It is known to all that in every district, there are public hospitals, where patients and doctors meet and there are also some assistants to help the doctors. He suggested to turn out every local hospital into a medical school.<sup>13</sup> The respective medical practitioners will have to lecture to the students, and the curriculum will be of three years only.<sup>14</sup> The learners could get some practical lessons regarding the symptoms and treatment of the ailments, and also some theoretical lessons from the lectures of the attending physician. The course should be considered equivalent to Graduation in medical education.<sup>15</sup> He thought that after the completion of the said course, they could join some recognized medical college for higher study for two years in medical education.<sup>16</sup> By this, we could get a good number of well trained and qualified medical men and doctors. Besides, the cost of medical education will thus be much cheaper.<sup>17</sup>

With the trained manpower he suggests serving the world in the field of medicine and treatment. Mohendranath Dutt again says, "Send out the qualified medical men to all foreign countries so that they might earn their living and increase the wealth of the country through their labour in foreign countries. And they will infuse their culture and civilization in foreign lands." By doing so the youth of India will get the opportunities to earn foreign remittances, could get employment and alongside they will be able to promote our indigenous mode of treatments. Also, our ancient culture will be promoted with such acts. On return from abroad, they would come with full of practical experience and medical knowledge of the developed nations. Thus they could enrich our native medication system with their acquired knowledge. Professors should be permuted with a different developed country. So also the students would be permitted. He says "Along with sending out of medical men, send out professors and scholars to foreign Universities."<sup>18</sup>

In the field of health, medicine and hygiene women could render the best part of their ingenious. It is their instinct to remain clean and purified. Therefore, he says that books on health and medicine young girls ought to be taught that the family must be neat and clean and healthy. If women are instructed on health, medicine and hygiene they will be able to treat ordinary diseases without calling in and paying a doctor. He says "If women are dirty, and men clean, the family becomes dirty and unclean. If women are trained in hygiene and sanitary laws, the family, the whole village, and gradually the whole nation will be healthy and prosperous." It is the cheapest and the rightest way of introducing sanitary laws is through the women.<sup>19</sup> Women must have the opportunity in the medical and healing profession. Female doctors are much needed regarding the diseases women and children, women medical counselors are more required than males. To the female medical practitioner, women patient will frankly recount their ailments than a male doctor. By nature, women are tender and carefully listen to the problem of the patient.<sup>20</sup>

Asia being the oldest epicenter of civilization has developed various modes of medicines He suggested a federation of medical men and doctors of Asian countries for propulsion research on medicine, treatments of ailments and reviving our ingenious system with the knowledge of modern research. So that by amalgamating the old system of medicine and developing new devices suitable to this age, a line of medical treatment will be formed. In his words "Now by making a federation of medical men of Asia, a new school of medicine and treatment of disease will be developed."<sup>21</sup>

### **Botanical Research Institute for Medical Research**

India, as well as Asia, has plenty of forest and full of its resources. These resources are not being utilized by its countrymen for want of proper knowledge and skill. The foreigners are predominant in these enterprises. This is a pesky scene in this concern. He appealed to the native enterprises looking after the matter and utilizes the forest recourse for countrymen.<sup>22</sup> From the mountainous tract to the plain, we have countless varieties of vegetation.<sup>23</sup> Other countries are generally indigent in vegetation; due to homogeneous climate, they could yield a mere one set of vegetation. But, in the case of Indian, from the Himalayas down to Burma and Ceylon, due to different types of climate, we see innumerable varieties of trees and herbs.<sup>24</sup> Scarcely there is any other country, where such a variety of the different plants and trees can be seen. In the Vedic period, the *Rishis* made an assiduous study on the plants and vegetation not only for Home but also for medicine from various plants and herbs.<sup>25</sup> Being felt the importance of herbs for medication since the dawn of Indian civilization, the people have researched and recorded about the herbs of the Himalayan regions.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, botanical research institutions should be opened in different forest places to study the vegetation and its utility for the benefit of man. The medical properties of vegetation, commercial value and other aspects of the vegetation could be discovered if botanical chemist finds an opening to make research; thus research on chemistry and medicine should be encouraged. Likewise, also in the plains of India, there are plenty of forests full of herbs. Botanical research institutes should be opened for the study of properties of vegetation. The Himalayan regions and the plains will give a great facility for the development of botanical researches.<sup>27</sup> Indian, with her mighty forests, is a grand field for the study of botany and botanical chemistry. Therefore, in the Himalayan region, in the forests of Central India, colleges are required to be opened for the sole purpose of studying botany.<sup>28</sup>

Mohendranath Dutt further enunciates, the ancient system of studying the vegetable kingdom, in all its bearings, should be again run. By studying Indian botany, one could be a master of the whole vegetable world. This is the grandest field that is to be found in any part of the world. He called on the youth of the country to take up the subject and devote their life to it. He suggests, to read the life of Linnaeus,<sup>29</sup> how hard he worked to study this subject?<sup>30</sup> The science of botany might be divided into three sections the theoretical, the medical, and the commercial. If the commercial aspect of botany is combined with commercial chemistry, it will bring up great success to our nation. Knowledge of chemistry and botany especially the medical aspect of botany is much required in the research of medicine. These are the few points he suggests, that the curriculum of the colleges might be modified in this direction.<sup>31</sup> He also emphasized the study of zoology and he says "Every Zoological garden should be turned into Research laboratory. This will greatly facilitate the researches on Zoology."<sup>32</sup>

For medicine, Mohendranath Dutt suggests the study of chemistry on a practical line. To utilize the medical properties of the herbs and plants study of chemistry must be encouraging for medical purposes. He presaged that chemistry should now be put into industrial form for medical purposes. He regrets the import of medicine from foreign countries and suggested to make it in our country with our resources. To do so we need pharmaceutical and chemical knowledge and skill. Here he counseled establishing research institutes and laboratories in different parts of the country. Chemistry is now a bread-giving means; for factories depend upon the expert knowledge of chemists. Factory and chemistry are practically correlative terms.<sup>33</sup> Greenhorn must be trained up in chemistry and botany and other such subjects as national need

might require. Theoretical chemistry, medical and applied or commercial chemistry are the three main divisions that should be incorporated in the curriculum of education.<sup>34</sup>

Mohendranath Dutt gave much emphasis on the study of medicinal chemistry for respective purposes; we have a long tradition in medicine and treatment for, from very ancient times, the Asiatic races have developed a system of medicine of their own. Later on, the Asiatic system of medicine has to pushback, and the non-Asiatic system has surcharged the Asiatic countries. With the revival of medical chemistry, the Asiatic system of medicine might also be revived.<sup>35</sup>

Another point is to be noted a form of medicine which is developed by Unani Hakims is medicated wine had been popular during the Mughal period. The physicians of the Mughal period use to make various sorts of medicated wines. Likewise, the Hindu *Kavirajes* had produced different sorts of medicated wines. These medicated wines were used as an herbal tonic. The common medicated wines, which are generally seen in the market, are of ordinary quality and are mere emulation of the old medicated wines of India and archaic. These medicated wines should be revised under proper ward that our ancient medical knowledge might again come into the forefront.<sup>36</sup>

### Conclusion

Considering the view of Mohendranath Dutt's on medicine and ailment, India has the greatest possibilities in the field of the revival of medical science and modern medicine. Because India having vast natural resources partly deposited in soil in the form of mineral and chemical and partly in our forest and mountains could be utilized for research on medical science and in the production of medicine. Not only that we have large manpower and perhaps India has the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world. With our huge manpower and recourses, we could dominate the world in the sphere of medicine. For that, we need better training-skill, equipment, more and more research in the field. Above all, on behalf of the government, it is our urgent need and goodwill along with proper planning to utilize national recourses and manpower so that India might be obtaining its deserved position as viewed by Mohendranath Dutt.

### Notes and references:

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2. Mukhopadhyaya, Devkumar, "Monishi Mohendranath Dutt,- Jiban, Tapashya and Karma", in Raghunath Basu and Ajit Kumar Ghosh, eds., *Vivekananda-Mohendra Bhupendra Sanskriti Charcha*, (Bengali) Kolkata: The Mohendra Publishing Committee,2010, p.89
3. *Ibid*, p.90
4. *Ibid*, p.90; also see Chatterjee, Anjona, *op.cit*, pp.6-7
5. Ayurveda, Sidhha, Yoga, and other local folk medicines.
6. Unani medicine, Greek system remodelled by Arab medical men.

7. Dutt, Mohendranath, *Lecture on Education*, Calcutta: The Mohendra Publishing Committee, 2006 p.73, also see Dutt, Mohendranath, *Nation*, Calcutta: Mohendra Publishers Committee, 1954, p.22
8. Dutt, Mohendranth, *New Asia*, Calcutta: The Mohendra Publishing Committee, 1954, p.38
9. *Ibid*, p.39
10. Nation, *op.cit*, p.22
11. Lecture on Education, *op.cit*, p.73
12. New Asia, *op.cit*, pp.38-39
13. Lecture on Education, *op.cit*, p.74; also see Nation, *op.cit*, p.23
14. Nation, *op.cit*, p.23
15. Lecture on Education, *op.cit*, p.74
16. *Ibid*, pp.74-75, also see Nation, *op.cit*, p.23
17. Lecture on Education, *op.cit*, p. 75
18. Nation, *op.cit*, pp.23-24
19. Lecture on Education, *op.cit*, p.120
20. Dutt, Mohendranath, *Status of Women*, Calcutta: The Mohendra Publishing Committee, p.31
21. Dutt, Mohendranath, *Federated Asia*, Calcutta: The Mohendra Publishing Committee, 1949; p.119, also see New Asia, *op.cit*, pp. 38-39
22. Dutt, Mohendranath, *National Wealth*, Calcutta: The Mohendra Publishing Committee, 1952, pp.47-48
23. Nation, *op.cit*, p.11
24. Lecture on Education, *op.cit*, pp. 75-76
25. *Ibid*, p.75
26. Federated Asia, *op.cit*, p.95
27. *Ibid*
28. Lecture on Education, *op.cit*, p. 75
29. Carl Linnaeus the Swedish botanist, zoologist, and physician who formalised binomial nomenclature, the system of naming organisms. He is known as the “Father of modern taxonomy”
30. Lecture on Education, *op.cit*, pp.75-76
31. *Ibid*, pp.130-131
32. Dutt, Mohendranath, *Rights of Mankind*, Calcutta: The Mohendra Publishing Committee, 2017, p.19
33. Nation, *op.cit*, p.11
34. Lecture on Education, *op.cit*, p. 129
35. *Ibid*
36. National Wealth, *op.cit*, pp.68-69