

Psychiatry in the West

By

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In the last issue we considered the position of Psychiatry in India—its past and present—briefly. It will be worthwhile now to consider its growth and present state in the West. Any story of its development will be incomplete without tracing it from two angles *viz.* Medicine and Psychology.

First let us consider the medical aspect of it as insanity is essentially a disease whether pathological or functional. If one goes through the history of medicine he will find that there were no two other major factors which have tremendously influenced the growth of it, than war and religion. War through its terrible destruction and devastation brought misery, famine and pestilence. The casualties of war—wounded, maimed and the infirm—were innumerable. Man is a mixture of good and evil. In his wildest moments he kills and destroys only to return to weep over the dead and wounded. This potential instinct for goodness found expression in some. The sight must have been horrible and sickening and many must have turned away from it. A few saw the magnitude of the problem and slowly but steadily worked to solve the problem by erecting hospitals called *valetudinaria* for the soldiers, and poor homes for the destitute.

Religion too had its good and bad effects. Even before the advent of Christianity in the West, the pagan religion of Rome and the Greece was highly developed in ethics and morals. They tended the sick and succoured the poor. Their public health measures were highly developed as they were nations who believed in physical strength and beauty. Yes it produced classes and imposed restrictions. Medicine could not be practised

by all and the whole thing was mixed up in mystery and ritual. Later Christianity with its doctrines of love and self-denunciation spread into Europe. In the early days Christians did a lot of good, tending the sick and succouring the poor. They had a high sense of ethics and morals. This could be termed the golden age of Christianity. They had a classless society. The popularity of Christianity made it a fashion for aristocracy to embrace the religion. However, the earlier conceptions and mal-practices must have influenced it as it sank to a level of superstition and restrictive dogmas that pure Christianity has never again been seen. Can any one think of the degradation of a religion whose creed was love and forgiveness, but whose Popes and bishops presided over synods and courts condemning the innocent to be burnt alive, and declaring war on innocent nations? Yes a few, constrained by their love of the poor and needy, strove hard for the amelioration of suffering. It is due to them that we see such international organisations like the Sisters of Charity, Society of Vincent D'Paul and others.

I am here concerned with the development of psychiatry. Neither war nor religion did any good to it. In war the insane were neglected, locked up in dungeons or put in chains and fetters. Religion never tolerated them, but considered them to be witches, and ordered them to be destroyed. Any attempt to rationalise their behaviour was heretical. Any progressive thinking in those days were heretical and came into conflict with the established Church of Rome, and the latter stooped to any thing to see that the dogmas of the church

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were not challenged. No wonder that it took hundreds of years to prove that science was superior to superstition. There rose up great thinkers from the days of Greece, Mesopotamia, Assyria and India who thought that insanity was a disease of mind and that the brain was the seat of the mind, but they were far in advance of the time and they had to fight against over-whelming odds. For a time it looked as if they were losing and there must have been many who despaired. It was only at the beginning of the eighteenth century that any definite improvement was made. During the dark age of Europe there were great physicians who challenged the logic of labelling the insane as witches. They put forward sound theories of causation and progress of the disease, and elaborated sound systems of treatment but they were all neglected, attacked or made victims of inquisition. The names of Agrippa of Nettscheim and his disciple Joann Weyer stand supermost. During this period treatments also were cruel; the insane were starved, persecuted by flogging, chaining, ducking or by inflicting burns and other wounds. Blood letting was another very popular method. Small successes were exaggerated and failures neglected.

By the Seventeenth Century two changes took place. One, doctors began to give importance to the cure of the physical conditions by physical means or surgery. The other was the great contribution by the eminent anatomist, Thomas Willis, on the structure and functions of the brain. These findings have eventually led to present day physical treatments like insulin, malarial, and electro-convulsion therapies, and surgical interference in emotional upsets. Opposed to this idea of the purely physical approach was the school of thought that the working of the brain was more than the sum total of its physical functions. They proved the emotional aspect of physical diseases, and physical conditions causing emotional

upset. Herein comes the psychology. Psychological understanding of abnormal behaviour—in disease is called Psycho-pathology.

Psychology in the early days was purely the concern of philosophers. They sat round and argued at length about the working of the mind; but their theories were purely speculative. Any intelligent man could bring in a new theory if he had the ability to think up some thing, but these arguments threw light on certain fundamental principles of the working of the brain. It is only very recently that psychology has passed from the stage of speculation to that of experiments, and it is the youngest of all sciences. It remained for the Russian scientist, Pavlov, to prove by experiments, important biological and emotional functions of the brain. One German doctor, George Stahl, was the originator of this theory of emotional factors in physical and mental diseases.

By the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, having tackled most of the common diseases, doctors began to take some interest in mental diseases, hitherto neglected. The empirical method of Hipocrates and the emotional aspect of Stahl gained some progress. All round development of the sciences with the invention of laboratory apparatuses and instruments, e.g. microscope, brought about unprecedented impetus to medical progress. Coupled to this was the change in outlook of the public towards the insane. Several workers in different countries began to attack the problem from different angles. Once knowledge began to break its narrow barriers it crossed and criss-crossed. Even at this time, the standards of the mental hospitals and the treatment meted out to inmates is far from humane. A small account of one of the important hospitals that existed at that time in England will give readers an idea.

The Bethlem Royal Hospital of

was established at least some years ago. It first started as a "mad house" to keep wandering lunatics away from the aristocracy of London. So you see the object was purely selfish. Here patients were huddled together in narrow and ill ventilated dungeons, often several people in one. They were subjected to all sorts of tortures and humiliations. It was once a common pastime in London to visit Bethlem, (the word "bedlem" came into the English vocabulary from "Bethlem") to watch the antics of these poor wretches. They were starved, naked, with only some straw to sleep on, which was always soaked with their own excretions. There was another one at York, where also the conditions were no better, if not worse. The later was destroyed by fire and there were complaints about gross irregularities. So due to public pressure, Samuel Tuke, a Quaker, took over the management of this institution and named it the "York Retreat". Here he cleansed it of undesirable elements and did away with all sorts of cruelties like flogging, chaining etc. This is perhaps the first humane mental hospital. Progress also took Bethlem in its stride. A Royal Commission was set up due to which it improved and progressed till today it is one of the most modern and beautiful hospitals in this country, or even in the world. (Incidentally it was part of my training hospital).

In other countries improvements were taking place. Torturing or burning of the insane were done away with in many countries, by law. In Paris, Pinel abolished seclusion and restrictions in his Bicetre hospital and later the criminals were separated from the insane. He was first branded as a fool but he won through and several other humanitarians took up similar work in Germany, England and America. By this time, G. Cheyne of Edinburgh, published a treatise on nervous diseases which was perhaps the first comprehensive text book to be published on this subject.

On the treatment side also several changes took place. Some thought that these diseases were caused by a change or imbalance in the body fluids (humors) and tried to cure it by giving blood instead of letting it out. This idea has led today's understanding of chemistry of the body and the effects of hormones and their influence on mental health of man. Several people, important among them Blauler and Kraepelin, began to study these diseases by proper investigation, observation and clinical statistics. To them we owe the present day classifications according to their causes, progress, symptoms and signs, and prognosis of the disease. They were mainly interested in tackling these on a purely physical basis i.e. they thought that all mental diseases were caused by changes in the structure of the brain though in some cases these changes were not obvious. Even today there is nothing to prove to the contrary. It is quite possible that with development of ultra-microscopic investigations and hitherto unknown channels, that these facts will be confirmed or otherwise. They have proved beyond doubt that certain mental diseases like General Paralysis of the Insane, certain types of Dementia etc. are definitely, due to degenerative changes.

But the greatest of all were the findings of Freud, Jung and Adler, the giants of modern psychiatry. Before going into the details of their findings, let me trace the sequence of events that led to them. Mesemer a contemporary of Pinel, discovered a theory called animal magnetism and started hypnotising people in Paris. This became very popular. Scientific study proved that it was only auto-suggestion. Later hypnotism was used in surgery to reduce pain in the absence of anaesthetics. It became very popular throughout the world and it is named after the discoverer: "Mesmerism". Later Charcot of France, a great neurologist and neuropathologist, began to use it for study-

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ing the emotional factors in neurosis. This led to important findings in hysteria and epilepsy. An institute, the Salpetriere, became very famous for it was here that Freud, a young enthusiastic physician, who was also a lawyer, philosopher and psychologist, came to study under Charcot. His work in dynamics of the mind and causes of neurosis has been unparalleled in the history of psychiatry. His system of analysing the patient and finding out the causes of disease is called psycho-analysis. Two others who collaborated with Freud were Jung and Adler. They differed in many ways with each other and finally broke away, each founding a separate school of thought. All these different angles of approach have contributed immensely towards the pro-

gress of psychiatry.

The Twentieth Century has seen tremendous improvements in the conception of disease, treatment and preventive measures. Today there exist most up to date hospitals where the patients are admitted without any formalities. They can come in when they are ill and go out when they like. No restrictions, no seclusion, no physical restraint or violence. More important than all these is the change in out-look. A mental patient is never considered an inferior due to his illness. This change in out-look was mainly due to the work of Dr. Henry Maudsley, a pioneer in England, who established a hospital in London just to propagate this idea. Today it is one of the premier teaching psychiatric institutes in the world.

South India Tour

General Secretary's Tentative Itinerary

Arrive	Triyandrum	February 1st	Depart	February 6
	(Ernakulam, Neyyoor & Nagercoil	2,3,4 & 5)		
"	Madura	" 6	"	" 8
"	Tanjore	" 8	"	" 9
"	Vriddhachalam	" 10	"	" 11
"	Madras	" 11	"	" 13
"	Vellore	" 14	"	" 15
"	Ranipet	" 16	"	" 17
"	Madnapalle	" 18	"	" 19
"	Guntur	" 21	"	" 22
"	Rajahmundry	" 23	"	" 24
"	Hyderabad	" 25	"	" 26