

The American Attitude and its Impact on the Global Health Care and Practice of Medicine

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PERSPECTIVE

For some curious reasons, what is happening in USA is considered as the best practice by the general public and the doctors in particular in India and several other countries. They and their practices are considered as the model all over the world, be it technology, food habits, medical treatments or lifestyle issues. This trend is especially true in the case of medical practice and patient care issues. In other words it appears that the trendsetter for all our activities in all major areas of human life is now USA. Though there are several positive trends to be copied, the negative trends in USA outnumber the positive ones and in one sentence one can say very confidently that the overall impact on the rest of the world by USA is against sustainable development, against sustainable health care and even sustenance of human life on earth. The way it influences practice of the doctors all over the world is phenomenal and is detrimental. Outwardly they appear to be very much concerned about welfare of the rest of the world and humanity, but deep inside things are different. Though there are exceptions and exceptional individuals in USA, who are fighting for social justice and human rights, the overall attitude of their decision making people and the administration of America is self-centered, with no genuine concern for the other person or the other nation. Everything and everyone works for money or for some or other personal gain, unmindful of the rest of the society- the major concern is for more money- more profit- more comfort- in that process the natural net result is less and less of humanitarian attitudes. In the USA-envisaged modern world-order, everything is mechanical, systematic and perfect, but humanitarian practices and attitudes are to be artificially generated or celebrated by observing several 'world days' including the 'world humanities day' or the 'world mother's day, 'fathers' day and several other days. Even in observing these 'world days' there is often several hidden agenda of promoting some profit making organization. By observing a world humanitarian day we declare that we have no humanitarian attitudes during the remaining 364 days.

If we are human beings we should show concern for the fellow beings as the basic quality, it has to be developed and nurtured

by default and it should be there in every individual everyday throughout our life. It seems now that we forget to live the life of a human being for the remaining 364 days. The same must be true regarding all the other world-days too; the social concern that is expressed while observing these 'world-days' is artificial and transient only, that too to market some ideas aimed at profit- often the activities are sponsored by a profit-hungry market giant selling a product or an idea for profit. Apparently these days project the welfare of a marginalized group or unorganized group and they are marginally and temporarily benefitted and hence no one would dare to speak against it. What happens on these 'world days' is paradoxical and contradictory to the projected objectives of social justice. This is because these 'world days' give numerous opportunities for the business-minds to advertise or sell some of their consumerist ideas or products using victims of the problems that are highlighted on that day. Who is sponsoring the expenses involved for observing these world days speaks for it regarding the major objective behind the practice of observing several world days. The same fact holds good for all the other days observed like the World Diabetes Day, World Heart Day, World Kidney day, Liver Day, Valentine Day or 'what-not day'. Can such world days improve the situation or solve the burning health problems in the world? All diseases known to mankind are due to one or other kind of marginalization and all can be traced to problems in diet, lifestyle, and environment, (mostly man-made problems) and we do not bother to address these basic issues [1,2]. What the people all over the world needs is awareness of good lifestyle, of basic health needs, and empowerment for achieving these goals.

We tend to forget the fact that, in the matters of health care and human behavior, the whole world is a single unit and it cannot sustain or go on if things are happening in the way the Americans practice and propagate. The Americans and their followers buy more, eat more, spend more unmindful of the rest of the world. The amount and types of food they eat, the way they spend money all are worth mentioning. Ninety percent of their people are obese or overweight. No country in the world will have so many numbers of casinos where there is authorized and organized gambling with permission from the authorities. They spend money on

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unhealthy foods, beverages, and luxury items without limits and finally in gambling too, which the whole world is now copying and imitating [3]. Hard earned money would never be spent that way by any sensible human being. But every service needed for human well-being and comfort is got only on payment and by default all services, including disease care facilities, are established in private sector. The only good thing about them is that they are obsessed with perfection in individual activities of any kind (but that perfection is got only for a price)-be it surgery, patient evaluation, or building something. But the perfection they aim at is not subjected to scrutiny of social justice-because even if that product is useful it is not offered to everyone; in USA the medical treatment is prohibitively costly and is not accessible to anyone in the world unless they are extremely rich or are supported by insurance; 'No money no treatment' is the overall situation even for a citizen of USA.

In research they go to any extent to bring out a product and to make profit out of it, whether that product is cost effective or not is of no concern for them. If any natural substance is observed to be useful for health, then they start researching to find out the active ingredient in that and once that is identified, it is studied in detail and artificially manufactured and brought out as a tablet or capsule with patent rights to the company behind the research. Apparently it is a great idea-but it is the business mind that works there most of the time. Take the case of turmeric, which is found to be useful for healthy living and is known to protect from several diseases. They could isolate curcumin the only substance they could isolate- and then they would propagate that all the beneficial effects of turmeric are due to that isolated component and not to the whole- natural turmeric [4]. Now researchers are being undertaken on curcumin to find its usefulness in some diseases. Once some benefits are documented, often times artificially documented, the next step of the research would be to manufacture curcumin artificially by a chemical process with patent for the company. Finally the natural turmeric and the farmers who produce it would be ignored in the bargain, because of the clever marketing strategies; people would even think the artificial product is superior to the natural product. Apparently there is no harm in doing research on these lines if it is carried out without a profit motive. But common sense tells something different, why not popularize the use of turmeric as an additive in diet, so that all people are benefited without any extra cost and the farmers are also benefited and we get all the benefits of the natural product without any extra expenditure [5].

Not only that all are benefited by that approach, it is genuine too, because the beneficial effect of turmeric may also be due to some other components of turmeric other than curcumin and it could be that it is maximally useful only when used as such or probably even better would be the use of raw turmeric. The research should have been to look into these aspects and to change the lifestyle practices and to see whether raw turmeric is better or the cooked one or the dry powder is better. Thus outwardly there appears to be some perfection in individual activities but it appears that there is no perfection. Collectively the overall attitudes suggests that USA as a nation appears to be a profit-hungry giant international businessperson. Now the USA led genetic research is happening all over the world with profit alone as the ulterior motive and never to take the world forward. Consumerism without limit is the true reason behind global warming and its consequences [6]. The floods and the landslides in Kerala are the final effect of the impact of global warming and have to see as the beginning of the end of

human race due to the same issues only. If all the USA led self-centered activities, the resultant consumerism and the confusion and disharmony are to continue, the next species to become extinct on earth would be human species [7,8] (article in Nature journal, Stephen Hawking in his lecture in July 2017 on mass extinction). It is all due to the American sponsored attitudes and consumerism and its impact on human survival.

At this juncture the existing attitudes in India and USA are worth comparing too; India also is not bothered about basic issues in any aspect of human welfare and behavior including health care, waste management, drinking water or nutrition- but we are very keen to bring in their cutting edge technology with the kind of perfection they have in USA. India is blindly copying all the consumerist ideas from them. The social set up in USA or the rest of the developed world has at least succeeded in making available uniform standards in basic facilities required for decent human survival (as compared to other developed countries all these facilities are offered only on payment in USA). Luckily for them, unlike in India, all the basic amenities were in place before the consumerist forces had tightened their grips on their lives. In USA, like all the developed nations, they collect all the waste systematically and there is- no waste seen anywhere, littering anywhere is fined too-but it appears that they do not segregate all the wastes at the point of origin, that means they probably would be dumping all these- or may be by filling some barren land or dumping them somewhere in their country or in the ocean or in other countries, to keep their country clean-looking.

This I am suspecting because their attitudes suggest that they are not bothered about the other countries or the future generations [9]. America is five times the size of India with less than one fifth of population as compared to India. They have enough and more vacant land and they think it can stand any kind of abuse of nature forever. Even in China they have started segregating waste at the point of origin and collecting them separately. In the hotel-rooms in China they have kept separate wastebaskets for different kinds of wastes, which I have not seen even in the American hotels. I had personally witnessed the attitudinal differences between countries and my own opinion is that the perfect models for social justice and health care are the Scandinavian countries. Sweden has even become a zero waste nation. But India follows American models blindly, be it waste management or health care or disease care. But the truth is that all that is happening in USA has to be ignored if the humanity and the world have to sustain and progress. For every service offered, they collect money and make profit out of it. In the airports of USA, to get trollies to carry our luggage, the passengers have to pay 5 dollars per trolley. The trollies are kept locked and will be released only after inserting credit card and making the payment. Unaware of this, I had tried to pull a trolley and I had seen several other passengers doing the same, including some old people, but later they realize that it is unavailable. These trollies are unlocked and released by an automated system after making payment, which the regular passengers in USA only are aware of. At the same time, these passengers, who fail to get a trolley and are waiting for their luggage at the side of the carousels (conveyer belts) would be surprised and even be praiseful of the perfection of the automated system for dispensing the trolley. Even if it is on payment they could have made it user-friendly and made available to the needy by entrusting someone to collect the five USD for the trolley.

All the airports in most of the countries except USA, these facilities

are free for all the passengers. The policy in USA is of 'No money-No facility'-if you are sick also it is the same. In the hotels in USA the waiters rightfully claim a 10-20 percent tip as their legitimate right. Tips and commission are legalized in USA. I was surprised at the attitude of the taxi driver when I went to USA for the first time, that too after visiting Denmark- it was in 2012. I fixed up the rate for the taxi, with some bargaining only, from airport to hotel; then he takes me to the hotel- I pay the said amount- he looks at the currency and verifies the amount, then the taxi driver asked me, as if I had done something seriously wrong, "No tips?" I gave one dollar tip, which I thought was more than enough, he accepted it reluctantly only, and he was not happy at that. Later on I came to know that the rate of the tips vary from 10%-20% for any service and it could also be so for the huge purchases from USA like the defense and industry purchase. (God only knows whether the big business deals are fixed up only for pocketing this commission or not). No one takes back the changes if by chance they pay in cash, but it is another matter that and it is a brighter side too- they do not make payments in cash, pay only with cards- that at least is good whatever money they transact is only white money unlike in India- where everyone prefers to transact in currency which often is black money. In contrast, a year before going to USA, on reaching Denmark, at the airport, I asked the taxi driver for the fare when he said 90 Kroner (DKK) I started bargaining for reducing it further- the Pakistani taxi driver then cautioned me that we should never ask this question again to anybody else in Denmark, he told me that 'nobody will cheat you here'- he went on to say that 'he will give a printed receipt at the end of the journey'. Nobody will accept any tips in Denmark, if someone offers tips it is considered as a humiliation or disgrace and they will look down upon you.

The third time I went to USA was in October 2015 to present my research article, on the criteria developed to diagnose SLE, along with my wife. We were staying in a hotel, the venue of the conference. As before I had to pay the registration fee and the hotel expenses and we had spent around 1200 USD for registration and accommodation alone besides INR 250,000 for travel and other incidental expenses. In the hotel we stayed lots of people come to dine and drink, till late night on the first day when we arrived it was 11 pm-what we got to eat at that time was only chicken and two pieces of bread at a huge price [10]. As usual the waiter wanted tips for his service. Every service is a paid service only, but what is provided is individually safe and is of good quality-individually things are perfect but collectively USA is in a mess.

Coming to patient care issues; everything in USA is under private sector, every hospital is a private organization. In health care sector, even research works could be happening in the private sector only. Every researcher who is working under a corporate company has to apply for funds from NIH (National Institute of Health), they have to convince a body constituted by the NIH on the need of the research, and they work for getting the funds released from NIH to that private institution (there could even be a professional group for arranging the funds from NIH for a fee). Overall in such a situation, the objective of research is often the money involved and not welfare of the human beings but apparently it is projected that the expected outcome of research would change the human life itself. Thus in every sphere of human activity one can see the heights of profit motive and self-centeredness in USA. If you have money, you have all the comforts in the world; of course bought at a price, from all over the world. If you do not have money you can go to hell-They collect money for whatever they provide,

nothing is free. In short there is someone who is making money from every service, which is given meticulously and perfectly. All the bad trends in USA have infiltrated or are copied into India but on top of that all the payments in India are made in cash, in this scenario one can imagine the damage that could happen to Indian economy and that society. In the case of the doctors who work in USA, they are under pressure to generate income for the private establishment they work for, as is now happening in the corporate hospitals in India.

I could witness the plight of the Africans now in USA-they and the entire black race including Indians, were once treated as untouchables till 1963. Now they enjoy, legally at least, equal status as any other American citizen. They became accepted as equals due to the freedom struggle, which was non-violent in nature, led by Martin Luther King Jr, who followed the footsteps of Gandhiji. Mr. King adored Gandhiji and was all praise for the non-violent movement and he even trained his followers in practicing non-violence in their fight for freedom. He used to carry always a book on Gandhiji with him. Even when Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated, the suitcase he carried on that day contained a book on Gandhiji. In the memorial center at Atlanta, there is a Gandhi house where all the details of Gandhiji are exhibited including some personal possessions of the Mahatma, which they have collected. The memorial centre has preserved also the house where Martin Luther King Jr was born and brought up. Legally the blacks in USA now enjoy the same status as the whites- but due to lack of proper guidance and directions they are the worst affected victims of the USA model of consumerism; they migrate to USA to do some or other work, and end up copying all their bad habits and eat all the junk foods in large amounts, without any of the protective dietary items, which the Americans consume, and put on weight like anything, transforming them into morbidly obese giants, worse than their obese native counterparts in all respects. I carefully watched their eating behavior in the hotels; the kind of foods they chose while eating in the hotels-they often do not take the fruits and vegetables, even if it is kept on the table, but take large quantities of the fast foods and the junk foods as most of our people do [11].

If the world has to sustain, America has to change, otherwise the human species will be extinct in another 300-400 years. It is impractical to establish human species in space- it is an objective pushed by the consumerist lobby without common sense. We should find out ways and means to preserve human species on earth itself.

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