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Factoring the Human into Health

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Factoring the Human into Health

“Science is the foundation of excellent medical education, but a well-rounded humanist is best suited to make the most of that education.”

David Muller

Dean; Professor; Marietta and Charles C. Morchand Chair in Medical Education
Icahn School of Medicine

It was just another day for me to pull myself off the bed and go to work. I was feeling physically weak for the past few days. My colleagues would insist I must visit the doctor. I procrastinated as much I could for various reasons. Having had chicken pox few months ago, I assumed it as related weakness. Also, somehow I neither liked the hospitals nor the mechanical approach offered by most of the staff in general. I winded up my work and went home hoping that sleep would rejuvenate me. As I felt weaker towards late evening, I finally visited a corporate hospital with the help of one of my colleagues.

I was asked to undergo few tests and soon the doctor would tell me I should be admitted. My colleague and I were puzzled as we had not anticipated it and expected to return home in a couple of hours. I stayed back; my colleague had to return. I was put on saline drip. It was later confirmed as dengue. I was a bit confused what all this meant since this is the first time in my life where I walk into the hospital and get admitted with no prior clue. That too with no familiar person around as I didn't want to disturb anyone late night and shared the same with my colleague. We had to cancel an event I planned for the students that weekend due to the unforeseen situation. The saying that *life is what happens to us while we are busy making other plans was reinforced*. Working and staying far from my hometown, to test my mettle I decided not to share with my family members about it.

I was initially in the general ward. On one side, I was feeling terribly weak. On the other side, whenever I felt like simply escaping into the world of my wild dreams hoping for solace, someone would snore aloud, and I just can't fall asleep! I wondered if it would be impolite on my part to say to my fellow patients, “Hey buddies, like our providers, can we also take turns to sleep in shifts so that while some are reveling in their dream world, others aren't deprived of their dreams?”

The physicians would keep coming for rounds to do their bit for the next few days. And the nutritionists to tell me I shouldn't be eating the very thing I would want to! I hated the patient feeling.....the vulnerability of having to depend on others for most of my works. The patient suit initially excited me as it was just another new dress for me to wear, yet the ones changed later were often bigger in size and slip off my shoulders. I'd laugh at myself

thinking...I got to gain weight to fit into these! And gain wisdom to fit into *my* life and newer versions of *myself*...followed the insight!

Little or no sleep and solid diet, no bath, no music...being a mere witness to fellow patients groans, the unsettling live music and discomposing live poems while not being able to do anything to paint their dreams wasn't easy! When the physicians came for their rounds, I often felt like saying, "Hey Doc, please listen.....let me turn on some music here and dance along with my fellow patients. We would recover sooner!" The more mature side of mine would whisper to me, "*the penned poems might help heal others, the tacit hold the universe together.....and ink the pen!*"

Almost every day acquaintances of mine would visit me and narrate their side of the story about dengue. How one of their relatives would often feel giddy, another needed bed rest for a long time, one was affected twice over two consecutive years etc. The fact that none died to the virus was comforting amidst the story telling sessions!

Whenever one of my colleagues visited me with a typical anxious or sobbing look, usually carrying some yummys for me, I'd be tempted to ask, "why don't you eat them yourself....the nutritionists seemed to have pledged to starve me to death!" and "save your mourning...I am still alive!". Didn't Rūmī say, "*The cure for pain is in the pain.*"

The only lively moments would be when my students would visit me, greet with a bouquet with their heart in it, surround me with love, share the happenings at University, make me laugh and feel at home. As I felt seen and connected *more as a human than a patient!*

Instead of asking the hospital staff when I can run away from your hospital and escape this monotony, I chose to have a civilized tongue. I requested for being shifted to a private room if possible. I was shifted into a semi-private room. There was some sunshine coming in from the window adjacent to the bed next to mine. It felt much better as I had to share my room with only one. It meant not many competing to keep me away from *my* dreams in the new tale!

Typically, three physicians would visit me at different intervals. One super serious, second super focused on scanning the numbers on the papers which do not represent the actual or complete me, the third, assuring and connecting. I would wait for the third as his visits alleviated my spirits to not be overwhelmed about this dream within the dream as we live on to come to terms with reality!

Meanwhile, I'd connect to a Heartfulness meditation trainer remotely and meditate by focusing on the divine light in my heart to keep myself centered and connected to a source within, to help me transcend this transient state and monotony. These meditative practices connecting to the oasis within, helping rejuvenate, reminded me how often we forget our own inherent worth! That no situation is bad or good as much as the meaning *we choose* to give it.

Finally, something in me prompted I return home and would be much better than at the hospital. I requested the third doctor for the same. He responded it might not be safe to leave as I am still very weak. He suggested it might even be risky. Yet, it might be considered based on the report of my platelet count, of which I was informed every morning, on request. I restlessly waited for the next day's report and the doctor's arrival to be permitted to go home eventually. I was informed the platelet count began to improve unlike the past few days where it was decreasing. Yet, I was warned I better stay at least for three or four more days to recover better before being discharged. I insisted I be permitted to leave, latest by the next day. Later, completed the exit formalities and left the place with a silent prayer for all those waging a war between hope and despair.

While returning I carried the wilting bouquet along with me as an aide-memoire. I felt a need for the reinforcement that *life is transient and to radiate thine fragrance when still gifted with it!* Though it is equally true that some blossoms retain and send forth their scents, alive or otherwise, and some exude greater fragrance post-life as though they hold the ambrosia. Looking at them, I'd wonder if they are the *living dead*¹, a condition of transcending 'I'-ness with love! And isn't it true that *life and death take on the meaning I choose to give them!*

Challenges as Opportunities

"A poem, a symphony, a painting, a mathematical truth, a new scientific fact, all bear in themselves all the justification that universities, colleges, and institutes of research need or require."

Abraham Flexner

Founding Director, Institute for Advanced Study
Former Director of Studies and Medical Education, General Education Board, New York
Former Consultant, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
Founder, The Lincoln School, Teachers College, Columbia University
Founder, Mr. Flexner's School

Life went on; the world was soon affected with Covid - 19 pandemic. Due to lockdown, and no possibility to go home, it was as though everything has come to a standstill. The building I was staying would suddenly become empty. I'd be alone in six storeys - ninety rooms dwelling for months at a stretch! Belonging to the field of wellness and mental health, this was a true test to my mental strength. I always believed lone time is bliss if one

knows how to turn it into solitude. Would this still be so while receiving overwhelming messages and calls from my own beloved students, several losing their loved ones, few despite not having had the opportunity to see them for the last time had to remain assiduous with their work of serving people and saving lives as they hailed from hospital management, health management, public health, and pharmaceutical management. And the news from friends, family and worldwide of deaths while having to remain locked up, not knowing till when? Few times, the government declaring my area as the red zone under the Covid 19 containment plan, meaning the area with the highest case load and hence barring the movement of people in and out of the zone with the exception of medical emergencies and essential goods and services. As the only child of parents who already lost their other child several years ago, now no longer certain if and when I'd get to see them. Could the reason for someone remaining alive amidst such chaos be only to witness fellow beings' deaths or suffering? When resilience is no longer an option but becomes a mandate and self-mandate. The *new normal* birthing the *new me* or *the other way round!* Which is the cause, which the effect?

The Cause and the Effect

As I chose to pause
To learn of the effect and the cause
Learnt I, me the effect, me the cause
An ignoramus I still am as I once was
Of the Divine laws
Yet, edified with the power of pause
The void of the void
Love, unalloyed
Impelled unto the choiceless choice
The unerring voice
Ignorance is bliss, I rejoice
The faith-filled poise
Word, the effect, wordless word, the cause
Because
Thou, the cause, me, the effect
Thine sangfroid to reflect
The moon salving the sun
Seem two, yet one
Unto the other, as each fine tune
In silence, to commune
Me, the pause
Thou, the effect, Thou, the cause!

Sailaja Devaguptapu

I guess the author Richard Wagamese meant pause as the cause in saying, *"I am created and re-created by moments of stillness and quiet. I am struck richer by a pure solitude that allows me to feel the world around me and lean into my place in it. I am not the rush of words in my life's narrative. I am its punctuation. Its pauses and stops. I am my ongoing recharge; in the silence I am reborn"*.

The life stories of noble beings like Nelson Mandela, Sri Aurobindo who used their solitary confinement to cultivate themselves left me with a clue. The evolutionary saga of Valmiki, who was once believed to be a robber into a harbinger poet, venerated also as Adi Kavi (translation - first poet) through onerous penance was inspiring. *Did all transformational journeys at some point involve and necessitated oneself to be **alone with the alone?***

For some reason, Swami Vivekananda's words, *"Work like a Master, not like a slave; work incessantly, but do not do slave's work."* kept coming to mind. If that meant scaling up my work or leaving my old vesture and work behind, I'd do it! A better reflected mind helped better discern between leaving behind the work and working pattern. I promised myself I wouldn't be doing the same old things or living the same old way should I survive this nightmare. Later followed the reflection, I rather do it even to navigate through it in a poised manner.

The pre-existing longing to work for bridging the gaps towards more humane healthcare systems, educating myself and my students about the possible ways of doing it is now coupled with the pressing need to be proactive with my own health in general and mental health particularly, while assuring others to be able to navigate through the emotional upheaval. My love for poetry, philosophy, literature, music, dance and meditation came to rescue more than ever. It fuelled my passion for science, arts, spirituality, and integrating them towards enhancing coherence and alleviating individual and collective consciousness. These cumulative experiences were haunting and compelling enough to reflect on the opportunities within the challenges. The intense and ever increasing restlessness to do my bit coupled with the restful mind propelled and led to designing, commencing, and developing a new elective course on Health Humanities. In retrospect, I wonder if it had its genesis in fullness of the void. To foster self-directed evolution and self-reliance through collective reflections, celebrate humanness, facilitate meaning making, humanistic and value based healthcare, cultivating resilience in the healthcare community and healing through arts were some of the objectives of the course. Its successful continuation during the second consecutive year with significant impact was extremely fulfilling. A poem penned during one such reflective moments to help shape humanism, and serve as a trigger for the students to mediate our grasp of the relationship between caregiver and receiver, as the third thing is *"Who are we?"*

Who are we?

Are we the tissues and the bones
Traversing amidst the knowns and the unknowns?
Are we the forms and our names
Amidst the land claims and the mind games?
The wanderers are we in the no man's land?
Or, the victims stuck in the quick sand?
Are we the seekers of the truth
The co-seekers thirst too to sooth?
You and me
From the void hail, do we?
Ambrosia for else broods the bee
As thine shade, the tree
Being without being, the river merging with the sea
The bygones and hereafters, letting be
Unto thine calling verse, the songbird set thyself free
The welkin whilst the marvels oversee
You and me
Who are we?

Sailaja Devaguptapu

Factoring the *Patients* into Health

*"Writing, painting, and other arts help students and residents see their patients not just as symptoms or ailments, but as people with lives outside the hospital whose stories affect their health. Hearing those stories can establish empathy between doctors and their patients. We are, after all, training to take care of **human** beings."*

Anna Reisman

Professor; Director, Program for Humanities in Medicine
Director, Yale Internal Medicine Residency Writer's Workshop
Yale School of Medicine

The third things are embodiments of art work such as a poem, music, images serving as a reflective trigger. They were found to aid in better understanding of the patient's illness and mediating contemplative dialogue among the healthcare providers (2). It's reported that art and cultural programs improved patients' quality of life; guided art discussions helped decrease their anxiety with several wishing to continue the experience with caregivers (3-6). Such initiatives create safe space for perspective sharing, connecting to

one's emotions, processing them, and making it easier to face, accept and share emotional vulnerability. They enable a therapeutic provider - patient relationship as these assuring experiences evoke emotions which are remembered after the experience as well.

Patient empowerment could become a natural outcome when they are equipped with simple yet effective techniques to develop self reliance and self-regulation. Music, dance, meditation help release endorphins - natural pain relievers, thus increasing the pain threshold and promoting pleasure (7-14). Heartfulness meditation was found to be associated with decreasing emotional exhaustion, ameliorating burnout, improving perceived stress, loneliness and sleep, promoting health, well-being and health related quality of life (15-21).

While there might be several ways including the above discussed practices to improve empathy and compassion to be able to connect better with others, Dr Nathan Kase - Dean Emeritus and Professor, Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Science opines that one couldn't be a good and a well rounded doctor who relates to patients unless one really had a good grounding in liberal arts.

Factoring the Healthcare Providers into Health

"It is difficult to get the news from poems. Yet, men die miserably every day for lack of what is found there."

William Carlos Williams

Former Chief of Paediatrics, Passaic General Hospital
Award winner - National Book Award for Poetry, USA
Gold Medal for Poetry - National Institute of Arts and Letters, USA
Pulitzer Prize

While physician's emotional intelligence is connected with patient satisfaction, this often might be mutual. The healthcare provides face multiple challenges - confounded with ethical dilemmas, imposter syndrome, emotional turmoil living and reliving the trauma especially when they identify themselves with the patients, given the greater frequency of encountering fellow being's death and navigating through life (22-26). The fact that they are human too makes them feel vulnerable and extremely helpless at times. Such moral and ethical dilemmas occur more often than reported. I recall excusing myself from a research study I was leading as the ethical approval was taken and given for the human subjects, yet during the execution the management committee was treating them merely as subjects. To my dismay, they were fine with such an approach too leaving me at the cross roads to wonder, was the study for the people or people for the study? Are we being useful to them or using them? Projecting the agenda as wanting to change the lives of the

people, was the actual agenda then to merely get few publications claiming authorship? Several times, one is expected to remain immune to such inner conflicts so as to not to allow them to interfere with one's work.

I've had the opportunity connect to the vulnerable, emotional and human side of healthcare providers as a fellow human and a Listener poet. While the experiences are too many and heart-wrenching to put it all into words, I am sharing the voice of a few through me.

A Physician's Voice

The healer and the human in me as one
At times feel I, I am outdone!
For, the bigger questions me bother
As witness I, a dear mother, or a brother
Lose a loved one
Alas, death over life has yet again won!
The patient and the human as one
I know not, alike how own the moon and the sun
For, in and out of the ward
If I were to ever let down my guard
And, let roll down my cheek a tear or two
I am afraid might lose hope, a few
As await plenty their dreams to renew
For, the blossom to dismay meant not the dew!
Unfailing, beholding the complex wounds, the soft tissues, and the nerves fine-spun
The recouping joy, and the recurring nightmares, I am to own as one!
Else's tears if I were to let sink my heart
Yester's dusk beclouding today's dawn, me, ripping apart
My new acirgy am afraid an unwary start
As one, how thence own the science and the art?
If I were to let not the autumns pale
Burgeon not amidst the gale
How let spring else's dale?
Another ferry unto thine safe harbour, how help sail?

In and out of the blue and white
As one, how embrace the light and the dead of the night?
For, the human in me and the ailing pathfinder as one
At times feel I, I am outdone!
Am I to embrace life and death as one?
Let jolt me, none
As one, own the done and the undone
The ensuing soma letting beget the soul elsewhere the new someone
And the sought in me, the seeker in thee as one
The will of the Absolute let be done!
Seek whence succour a dear sister, mother, father, or a son
For thyself or thine loved one
The home and the hospice albeit I own as one
Yet, betwixt the defeating fate and chance destiny when can cheer I none
The dad, husband, brother, son, friend, healer, and human in me as one
At times feel I, I am outdone!
For, can monitor I the saline
Can own not the meanderings of the rhine
The restoring and dimming sunshine
Unto the grape can sweeten not thine wine
Myself, ever seeking to refine
Another pawn me too in the play divine
The seeker in me, the sought in thee as one
The will of the Absolute let be done!

Listener Poet: Sailaja Devaguptapu

This physician shared about his self-conflict of how to integrate his physician side which demanded emotional stability with his human side of being a caring father and a husband which necessitated the presence of tenderness and its emotional expression. While I must confess, I find myself too in such situations of having to integrate and balance between emotional stability and the need for expression of tenderness many times while listening to a fellow human, the least I can do is to listen, listen and listen! It can help the speaker

with better emotion regulation as it opens up a space for processing and releasing them. Several providers require and seek such a space since connecting to their patients as a balanced caregiver requires of them emotional hygiene. Techniques such as Heartfulness cleaning too were found helpful (27). Based on the first law of thermodynamics that energy can neither be created nor destroyed but be transferred from one form to another, if an experience can lead to thoughts, thought patterns and emotions to be consolidated as impressions and retained in the memory involving the conversion of kinetic to potential energy, the inverse is possible too when backed with attention and intention.

Many providers seek to erase painful memories to be able to retain and regain their emotional balance. It isn't unusual that such experiences haunt them for years. Connecting to another as a Listener Poet, when I asked what he would like his poem to be about, he shared about an event that occurred four decades ago, showing how deep seated and long term such impressions could be. 'A Sad Story', he called it recalling the sudden demise of his former colleagues. A healthcare provider, he retired from the Army as a Colonel. He narrated of his meeting with two young well-turned out pilots one morning. Few hours later, he received the news of a helicopter crashing in the fields. He suddenly realized the doomed chopper was flown by the same pilots. He reached the spot with much effort amidst the rough terrain praying and hoping to rescue his comrades. On reaching there, he finds five charred unrecognizable bodies including the three deceased co-passengers. He wished to erase the day from his memory.

A Sad Story

The smell of the burning flesh
It's still fresh
A while ago, full of life and lively, they were
The pain of losing a comrade, how do I bear?
How do I share?
The heart still aches when I belong there
A chopper crashes
Strong men turn to ashes
In my mind, when it flashes
The past with future, clashes
And, life with death
Living else's death, the Live death

Was choked my breath
Was that Nature's wrath?
The sight of the sudden demise
An unfulfilled promise
Close or open, the eyes
The life's cruel dice
Rivering the hearts, into fumes as melted the unlived ice;
Embarked we to rescue
Knowing little it would all be grey and blue
The colorless empty hue
Failed my crew
Bodies charred, we knew not who's who
As another night, began the day new
For, close or open the eyes
Haunt the sight and memory of the sudden demise
The path thorny, the failed repertory
The live crematory, the sad story!

Listener Poet: Sailaja Devaguptapu

Such make or break moments often necessitate remaking ourselves to be able to navigate through them. Healthcare providers might find it challenging given their repeated exposure to anxiety provoking situations demanding processing the grief quickly on one side while their work leaving them with limited time to do so. A perceptive, receptive and reflective mind helping discover and build the inner resources enables us to rediscover ourselves, enhancing our ability to accept uncertainties and overcoming them. Development of these faculties and mental capacities helps improve emotional literacy given the human capacity of neuroception, the ability to distinguish situations or people as safe, dangerous or life threatening according to Dr Stephen Porges. Based on the Polyvagal theory proposed by him, identifying such triggers and regulating our response can help adopt adaptive behaviors. While such responses are believed to be subconscious, happening beyond one's conscious awareness, such perception can be enhanced towards a more enabling story to continue to remain socially engaged without withdrawing from the perceived threat. Meditative practices when practised regularly as prescribed can help enhance such consciousness; they were found to have a positive effect on

sympathovagal balance, an indicator of feelings of peace and happiness (27-31). Polyvagal theory ascribes instantaneity of one's response, emotion regulation and possible emotional restructuring to *feelings*. It reinforces the popular poet Maya Angelou's words, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them *feel*."

Progressing from thinking consciousness to feeling consciousness is achievable through the above discussed practices as they enhance the reflective capacity, enabling collaborative communication between the physician and patient (32-35). The heightened sensitivity fosters greater awareness which enables better and intuitive understanding of the other's problem promoting empathy, thus having an impact on the health outcomes (36). Considering these factors facilitates to adopt an integrative approach of attending to the whole being than limiting to the manifested illness. As said, "*The good physician treats the disease; the great physician treats the patient who has the disease.*" by Sir William Osler, the founding member of the Association of American Physicians, former Chair of Clinical Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, founding physician and former Physician-in-Chief of Johns Hopkins Hospital, and former Professor at School of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University. Also, as we connect, share and exchange communication on multiple levels than is apparent at the surface (37). As put forth by renowned neuropsychologist Paul Pearsall, "My *heart* told me that, if I would let it, it could send energy into persons and things and extract energy from them. It told me which doctors and nurses had "*good hearts*" that could resonate with my own and warned me about those hearts that were not yet open or were sending a dissonant and disruptive energy that could interfere with my healing."

Heartful Communication for Therapeutic Physician - Patient Relationship

"The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said."

Peter Drucker

Former American - Austrian Management Consultant, Educator, and Author

Award-winner of (US) Presidential Medal of Freedom

Grand Gold Decoration for Services to the Republic of Austria

Effective physician-patient communication was found to enhance the patient's psychological adjustments and mental health (36, 38-40). While it was reported to help patients regulate their emotions, patient dissatisfaction was attributed also to the breakdown in doctor-patient relationship (41-43). Some of the causes for the latter could be doctors losing focus on *holistic care* of the patients over time and a decline in communication skills of the medical students as they progress through their education, as

identified (44). While there is a greater need to appreciate the services of the healthcare community acknowledging their susceptibility to prevalent burnout due to gruelling clinical demands, depletion of personal coping resources causing stress, emotional exhaustion, and sleep deprivation, it might often be overlooked by the patients and their families given their own anxiety and stress during ill health (45-48). Heartful communication, enabling to uncover and connect to the common humanity, equipping to identify the underlying needs behind the feelings, helps acknowledge more readily that the basic needs being the same for every human, their expression could be different (49-52). Connecting to and through the heart gradually enables to shift the focus from conflicting needs to intrinsic qualities of generosity and compassion helping to resonate better with others feelings. It facilitates to progress from empathic listening to *empathic presence* i.e., 'withness'. A reflective response, "***I am here, I hear you, I understand and I care***" based on the 'be with' model proposed by Garry L Landreth then becomes a natural outcome. According to Dr Landreth, it is about making the others *feel safe* enough to allow them to be themselves, more fully. Dr Porge's polyvagal theory involving neuroception is also about *feeling safe* to be able to spontaneously engage with others. Since, the consistent practise of Heartfulness techniques helps ameliorate burnout possibly effectuating Heartful communication, they have the potential to both - enable the physicians towards better emotion regulation and (self) empathy to have an uplifting impact on the patients, and the latter to feel safe enough. It encourages the patients to cooperate better as it builds confidence and trust in the former, the diagnosis and the treatment which in turn might have an impact on the diagnostic process. Thus, helping to initiate and sustain mutually empowering and supported collaborative communication, these practices can play a critical role towards therapeutic physician-patient relationship. For, as put forth by the prominent orthopaedic surgeon Dr Terry Canale, "***The patient will never care how much you know, until they know how much you care.***" (53).

A purposive communication includes energetic and emotional communication as inferable from the above findings, encompassing the mental level. The electromagnetic fields generated by the heart were associated with encoding psychophysiological and emotional information perceivable and modifiable by others; and a disruption in these fields was observed to create adverse effects on health and behaviour (54-57). Involving the transference of subtle energies, the heart probably is a key moderator of pain as the cardiac coherence is associated with HRV - considered a marker for emotion and self-regulation, fatigue and wellbeing (27, 58 - 75).

Factoring *Health* into Health

"I went to medical school because I wanted a life of service and believed I would get meaning in my life out of service. We were saturated in medical school with negatives, things to worry about - bad news and diseases. I learned a lot of pathology, and a lot about medicines. We were taught virtually nothing about health."

Richard J. Jackson

Pediatrician; Professor Emeritus, Fielding School of Public Health,
University of California, Los Angeles

Former State Health Officer, California Health Department

Recipient of the Presidential Distinguished Service award & Henry Hope Reed award

I consider myself fortunate for having had the opportunity to connect with some great physicians. I am indebted and grateful. Yet, my interactions with several healthcare providers and students coupled with insights as the one shared above by Dr Jackson, necessitated to reflect on bridging the gap between good and great physicians. It needed me to know more about 'health' and what the word meant. In several societies, it has its origin from the root words which translate to *wholeness, tranquility, the one who is centered in themselves*. Experiencing wholeness and wholesomeness can help connect to the whole being of others as we experience that there is 'no other' and cater ourselves to *health* in a better way. This could be done in multiple ways such as integrating arts and art interaction into healthcare settings and curriculum of the students. It's a welcome step that several Higher Educational Institutions and hospitals have recognized the need for it and few began to work for the same. Music and dance with a potential to induce a state of flow into the practitioners as well as the viewers help transcend the limited ego; the latter helping embody self-awareness can lead to kinesthetic empathy enhancing connection and synchronicity between people (9-14). Integrating them into one's lifestyle helps extend their outcomes to our interpersonal interactions.

Adopting a proactive approach towards health focusing on salutogenesis by integrating practices aiming at wellness than focusing merely on illness - pathogenesis helps. Complementing the conventional approach to health with practices such as Pan-Eu-Rhythmy (pan - whole or universal, eu - divine or true, rhythmy - correctness in movement) could be beneficial. It's a practise to harmonise beautiful words, music, movements, and ideas into one coherent vibration resonating with the rhythm of life, balancing all the aspects - body, mind and spirit.

Encouraging and creating opportunities to read, reflect and learn through experiential sessions on bibliotherapy - the therapeutic aspect of book reading. It could be both engaging and empowering given it is a creative art therapy that includes various aspects - reading specific texts, storytelling, poetry therapy and guidance through books. Books by the following authors can be extremely helpful for such sessions as they enable and

encourage the readers towards reflective reading while appreciating the biological underpinnings:

- Dr Candace Pert (*Molecules of Emotion*)
- Dr Paul Pearsall (*The Heart's Code: Tapping the Wisdom and Power of Our Heart Energy*)
- Dr James Doty (*Into the Magic Shop: A Neurosurgeon's Quest to Discover the Mysteries of the Brain and the Secrets of the Heart*)
- Dr Brené Brown (*Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human Experience*)
- Dr Bruce Lipton (*Biology of Belief*)
- Abraham Flexner (*Usefulness of Useless Knowledge*)
- Anita Moorjani (*Dying to Be Me: My Journey from Cancer, to Near Death, to True Healing*)
- Dr Wayne Dyer (*I Can See Clearly Now*)

Experiencing wholeness probably not only helps in better understanding of Osho's words, "The one you are looking for is you" but also graduate to the awareness "The one you are looking at is you - the present, past or future you...through yourself." as we tend to appreciate that all of us though different yet alike, only at different stages on our path towards perfection. As the seven stages to become the perfect man, according to Sufism:

- i) The Commanding Self
- ii) The Blaming Self
- iii) The Inspired Self
- iv) The Secure/Peaceful Self
- v) The Content/Pleased Self
- vi) The Gratified/Pleasing Self
- vii) The Purified/Perfect/Complete Self

It reiterates that basic needs being the same for every human, their expression could be different - common humanity, celebrated in his poems by Yunus Emre, a poet and great humanist of all time whose poetry served as a fountain head of the humanistic concepts. One meaning of 'homo' in the word 'human' is same.

Reflection

"Health is wholeness and balance, an inner resilience that allows you to meet the demands of living without being overwhelmed" ~ **Andrew Weil**

"Healing is the return of the memory of wholeness." ~ **Deepak Chopra**

Beginning with the lab work at school, my inquisitiveness as a researcher encouraged me to experiment, observe and then infer based on the observation. Poetry connected me to a finer word for it - explore. Given my love for poetry, learning a new word always excited me! During such poetic plunges into the mazes between somewhere and nowhere to now

here, and at times from nowhere to somewhere to now here to everywhere, then there...I feel in love with (*the word*) Hakim! Yeah, the word! The poets though heartfelt are also mindful of the words and the word craft! The hopeless optimists as they simultaneously progress towards *mindlessness* and *mindnilness*! As expressed by Eckhart Tolle, "All *true* artists, whether they know it or not, create from a place of *no-mind*, from inner stillness." How often what's *within* matters more than what's outside...to give something its true meaning and to sustain it! Probably this is what the recipient of the Gold Humanism Award, Dr Jayaram Thimmapuram, Academic Hospitalist at WellSpan York Hospital meant in his TEDx talks on "Outer Chaos Is a Reflection of Inner Chaos" (76) Are the sustainable developmental goals to achieve a better and sustainable future for all, to do with this?

What if I crafted the sentence *without* what's *within* ()? It would then be "I fell in love with" Chaos! My students would have loved it if I gave such questions to answer in their exams to fill in the blanks! Yet, another chaos....whom does *I* refer to here? While some might leave the blank as blank, void as void, others might be feel encouraged to write essays filling it up with past and future, anything and everything...chaos! How to grade it...yet another chaos! I'd rather take care of what's within instead! Metaphors are poets' default keys to unlock (the hearts and minds) both the macro into the micro, micro unto the macro and connect them both as they connect to themselves unlocking their minds into their hearts and connecting to others through and with their hearts!

I might be appreciated by my students for giving such questions which didn't require them to copy! Or, may be instead I'd compel few to do it till they figure out who this '*I*' is? While I might be both loved and hated for it, transcending both I'd discuss how to overcome the duality of love-hatred with patients and be connected to them through *non-attached attachment*, in my next class! So, while it's true that inner chaos could lead to outer chaos, it is also true the outer chaos can help to dive deeper into ourselves to manifest a new outer!

Creating and holding 'intentional space' for such interactions facilitates deeper reflections to discover the potential within. As believed by Swami Vivekananda, "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man". According to him, each of us is capable of teaching ourselves and hence the teacher's duty is to offer opportunities to allow the inner wisdom to unfold itself (77). In the context of medicine and public health, I guess this is what the first professor of anatomy at University of Strasbourg, Professor Wilhelm von Waldeyer did with his student Paul Ehrlich, the Nobel Prize-winning physician and scientist. Alexander Flexner remarks the teacher could notice the potential in his student quite early. One day when Dr Waldeyer asked his then student Ehrlich what he was

doing, the latter said, "Ich probiere" translated as, "I am trying" or "I am just fooling." Recognising his pupil needed no directions, the professor was wise enough to say "Go on with your fooling." leaving him alone (78).

Science laid the foundation to my rationality. Grateful! Yet, it wasn't sufficient to find answers for recurring and confounding questions such as, if non-attached attachment helps serve others better, how to adopt it? I needed grounding in something more. While a completely detached approach towards a person might make them experience a sense of disconnect and unwelcome, identifying oneself totally with another's problem to the extent of being consumed by it, incapacitated to support their navigation through it would also be counterproductive. Meditation often came to my aid as it introduced me to 'moderation'. It helped refine and sharpen the discriminatory faculty to help discern when to let something happen and when to make it happen. When to go with the flow, when to become the flow itself, and how? When to be the cause, when the effect, when both. While there are multiple studies to demonstrate that one's state of mind has an impact on one's overall wellbeing and coping process, facilitating it or even blocking, discussing them all might necessitate a book to an article.

Self evolution, I realised required more of my artistic and spiritual side than my scientific mind. Was the extra large patient gown given to me at the hospital hinting at the need to better *integrate* the different me's into Me for a *balance*? Was I myself progressing towards wholesomeness while working towards holistic health? Was the Covid - 19 pandemic too the nature's way of restoring balance in the macro and microcosm? To enable me to *reintegrate and rebalance*. Are balance and rebalance about integration and reintegration and (health) restoration is about reconnection? If this is what Dr Deepak Chopra meant in saying "*Healing is the return of the memory of wholeness. Healing, health, whole and holy all mean inclusiveness. Body, mind, spirit, environment, relationships, social interactions are all one wholeness, and you're a part of that one wholeness.*", I healed!

Meta Reflection

"In your light I learn how to love. In your beauty, how to make poems. You dance inside my chest where no-one sees you, but sometimes I do, and that sight becomes this art."

~ Mawlānā Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī

As I continued my reflections and explorations, I found someone who unexpectedly made me experience the state of non-attached attachment, the bothering question. It seemed he transmitted this condition even as he spoke. Dr Madhukar Kochar, Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Classified Specialist in Pediatrics and a trainer of Heartfulness. He said,

“Nothing comes from nothing. Nothing gives you nothing. I am Nothing. I am aware I feel nothing. Without that nothingness, you are nothing. And when you have it, you have nothing. Within this life, it is everything. This is my poetry. Write in your poem what is that nothing.” enabling me to transcend myself and the duality!

Nothingness

Uncolor thine color
The me-less me, to discover
Nameless, formless
I am colorless!

Fully empty, in thine fullness, the Rhine
So let be the rhyme, thine
As colorless color, mine
Thou-less thee, let be the meter, thine

The Undefinable, to define
So be the rhythm, thine
For, the unworldly bird
Is a wordless word

Of words thine, free
Word less word, thine word shalt be
Salt less, the brine
The Undefinable shalt define

The push and pull, duality
Fullness of emptiness, empty full, reality
Thyself, when thou withdraw
Its mergence, ripe when raw

Sthita prajña ¹, the ripened raw
Unto Nothingness, thou, thyself when let thaw
The Living Dead, being
Doing without doing, its being without being

In Turiya², as one is
The breezeless breeze
Being nothing, and the awareness
Of nothingness

Absorbed and aware in sleep, deep
What hath thou sown thence to reap?
The me-less me
Thou shall thence be

To know me
Thyself, ought to know thee
The Selfless self, to let prevail
The veils, the veiless might lest fail

Worldly veils, up furlled, the veiless veil, unfurled
For the world, yet, not of the world
Thou shalt be
Me as thyself, thou shalt see

Color thine, uncolored
The me-less me, discovered
Nameless, formless
Thou art colorless!

Thou art the unworldly bird
The word less word
The veil less
The Selfless!

Listener Poet: Sailaja Devaguptapu

1 & 2. The words *Sthita prajña* and *Turiya* were mentioned by Dr Kochar during the conversation

Sthita prajña refers to a person of intellectual steadiness or steady wisdom, who experienced the truth from within.

Turiya is a state of pure consciousness, beyond thought and duality. Transcending and pervading the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, it is considered as the fourth state of consciousness.

Having been swept into the flow of expansion from now here to everywhere listening to him, overtaken naturally by a condition of neither suppressing nor regulating thoughts and thoughts, but transcending both. What if we had more such healthcare providers who not only are in such a transcendental state, capable of both 'witness' and being a 'witness', but also transmit it to others? Wouldn't it lead to wholesomeness, wholeness and holistic health? Ms Anita Moorjani's bestselling book "Dying to Be Me: My Journey from Cancer, to Near Death, to True Healing" in which she shared her experience of spontaneous remission helps understand what such states could mean and do from a patient's perspective.

Upon experiencing, reflecting and writing about nothingness, I had an urge to share with all my students at once that now I understand clearly what the quote, "*When the student is ready the teacher will appear. When the student is truly ready... The teacher will Disappear.*" by Lao Tzu meant!

Meanwhile, I totally forgot about (the word) Hakim to my greater love! Or did I allow both to align with each other? Since, "Human love changes and varies. Spiritual love, varies but never changes, and Divine love never changes and never varies." said the philosopher Peter Deunov. It reminds of the saying that human love isn't a substitute for spiritual love, it is the extension! The word 'Hakim' means all-wise, a learned person. It's one way of addressing a physician or a doctor in some countries.

Listening, I learnt and believe is about '*witness*'. Being Sthita prajña is about being a '*witness*'. How do I integrate and balance them both? Probably becoming (the *word less* word) Hakim would help me figure this out! Or writing a poem for Sailaja as Hakim's listener poet? "*You are the experiment, you are the experimenter, and you are the outcome.*" as says Kamlesh D Patel, a pharmacist, successful entrepreneur and global guide of Heartfulness. The path, the pathfinder and the Holy Grail!

As I relaxed and rested came the insight, "*Be with the witness and witness such witness.*" Put in another way, integration and balance is about "*witness with the witness and witnessing such witness.*" Witness within one's own heart and else's, including the patients'!

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