

Preventive Aspects of Moral & Social Hygiene*

By

Dr. (Mrs.) M. B. KAGAL

When we talk of moral and social hygiene the problems that pass through our minds are those of social diseases and their manifestations. Their origin, spread, cure, prevention, the people engaged in traffic which makes use of the brothels, the brothel keepers, the pimps and the rest that goes with it. Year after year the many causes of immoral traffic, social and psychological are enumerated, enunciated and evaluated in many different ways by scores of experienced persons. But the *root causes* are generally lost sight of as the signs and symptoms of the disease often mask the root causes. I am sure we all believe prevention is better than cure but in practice we generally head towards curative measures rather than search for the root causes. This is perhaps so because curing is often easier and speedier and generally more spectacular. Preventive measures need planned and persistent efforts in educating people for bringing about the necessary change in thoughts, attitudes and behaviour patterns amongst the people in the society.

Moral and social hygiene in its broadest sense affects the entire society as it concerns the preservation of the health of the society through the practice of duties in life. The word moral relates to the doctrine or practice of the duties of life; social is that pertaining to the society; and hygiene is the science of preservation of health.

Health has three equal components — physical, mental and moral and the three are so intricately woven together that it is difficult to say where one ends and the other begins. However, we shall confine ourselves to the problem of the moral health of the society as it is created by the lack of morals or in other words short comings in the practice of the duties of life:

If we try and summarise the causes of this lack in the performance of these duties we find that they mainly result from :

1. Lack of discipline in the family;
2. Ignorance;
3. Poverty;
4. Traditional lenient attitude towards the profession;
5. Emotional and psychological or extra physical causes.

But the most important one to my mind is the first one namely lack of discipline in the family. However if one tries to analyse any single case of moral turpitude, it would be difficult to pin it down to any one single cause but to many causes perhaps varying in degrees at one and the same time.

While tackling the problem of social ill-health we are generally inclined to lay stress on the curative aspect rather than the preventive

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side as the former is spectacular, sometimes yields quick results which are more satisfying to the worker in the field. The preventive aspect on the other hand needs more and continued patience and perseverance and the results though more lasting and may be even permanent are not seen in a decade or perhaps a generation. The present being an era of speed, short-cuts, show and easy returns hence generally the tendency is to take the line of least resistance to handle spectacular things.

Our existing programmes are entirely curative. It is not too early to think, plan and pursue preventive measures side by side with the curative measures and with greater vehemance if we want to give the right lead to the society. The disease is at the root and if we want to keep the tree of the human society healthy we have to feed the roots with the right kind of food. Unless this is done no amount of pruning at the top is going to make the tree healthy. I feel sure there cannot be two opinions in this matter. If we want a morally healthy society we must teach morals to the coming generation at the proper place and time, by proper persons in appropriate ways and in adequate measures.

The roots of the Society are embedded in the home and the most pliable, formative and impressionable age is the span of the first twelve or fourteen years of life. If this is accepted, it would mean that on the preventive side of the programme we have to begin with and concentrate on the children.

If we try and examine what is being done for the child in the home we will unfortunately have to come to the sad conclusion that though all parents are expected to do their very best for the welfare of their children, today the moral training so necessary to live a healthy, peaceful and contented life is sadly neglected. The results are evident every day in all walks of life. A stock taking is therefore very necessary. A comparative table indicating the past and present influence in education and a few suggestions for training at different stages throughout life in the home, school and the community are appended.

One of the objects of the Association is to raise the standard of character and conduct — and to uphold the highest family traditions. The real cause of social diseases is one's own internal cause of moral weakness which can be corrected only by spiritual uplift. The principle that continence is the larger virtue and not indulgence has to be accepted and society has to work towards its achievement. Parents must know and be aware of their total responsibility for the up-bringing of their children, the next generation which is the trust of the nation in their hands. We are perhaps still in the dream state of national awakening after a very long slumber in slavery. To enable the parents to understand their responsibility fully, a national parent adult education programme is necessary. In a Welfare State the State's responsibilities are great. The State's educational programmes can and have to influence the home, school and community. In days by-gone the home influence was the greatest and the firmest like a rock. Today this rock has been severely shaken up by what goes to make the modern civilization. As a result, it would perhaps not be an exagger-

ation to say that today the family force has become the weakest force, a 'bed and break-fast force' and the community forces have taken its place which used to be the weakest in the good or bad old days. These reversals in modern times and the strong community influences of unnatural, exciting, pornographic literature and films, hideous advertisements, shop window dressings and footpath exhibits are slowly, surely and subtly undermining the worthwhile human moral values in life.

The human animal is different from other animals only on the moral plane as his other reactions, activities and needs like those for food, sleep and self preservation are common with the other animals. If we agree that these influences are bad for human morality and life we cannot afford to spare any pain in putting a stop to those at any cost. We women particularly are expected to be the preservers and nurturers of human values and culture as these are passed on by the mother to the children. So we must take the lead in creating public opinion against these evil community influences which are subtly eating in to the human values and vitals. Shall we rise to the occasion and work or shall we go down with the modern influences? Some will say how can we put the clock back? Some will say how can we fight against the current and general trends? But good things are earned the hard way for which brave and not timid soldiers are needed. We must create public opinion and force Government's hands to put a stop to the prevalent wrong practices which slowly, steadily, surely, consciously and unconsciously tend to weaken morals individually and collectively and blunt the finer ethical tastes, values and attitudes. Shall we and can we rise to the occasion?

SUMMARY

1. Stress must be laid on preventive aspects of the programme and work started for preventive measures.
2. Present home, school and community influences are fast deteriorating.
3. Moral education of the society at all levels is necessary for prevention of these social diseases and vices.
4. Public opinion has to be created in this matter.
5. A national educational programme has to be planned and executed at State level for which the Association can give the lead.

LENGTH, BREADTH AND DEPTH OF TRAINING INFLUENCES IN LIFE.

PAST :	Influence in training :	PRESENT :
HOME—Strong - throughout life		Weak - begin to wane further progressively after school going.
SCHOOL— 1) for a small community 2) Was good and strong. Started with spiritual training and ended with ephemeral.		1) Expected for the entire community. 2) Expected to be good but at present very indifferent and weak. Ephemeral only.
COMMUNITY—Good.		Bad:- 1) Books, 2) Cinemas, 3) Advertisements, 4) Window exhibits in shops, 5) Tendency of extravagant, loud living.

A - Programme for home training by parents:—

1. Spiritual training in:

Simplicity	Self restraint	obedience and discipline	Respect for elders	Consideration and sympathy for weak and needy
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2. Take interest and supervise children's home work.
3. Take adequate interest in creative recreational activities of the school and at home.
4. Encourage sports and physical culture.
5. Encourage and guide in reading good books.
6. Inculcate love for plants, animals and birds.

B - Training in Schools by teachers:—

1. To continue the pattern of home training enunciated above.
2. Moral training.
3. Help children to cultivate taste for reading of good books—
 - (a) Biographies of great men and women.
 - (b) Discoveries.
 - (c) Travel.
 - (d) Poetry etc.
4. Creative recreational activities and hobbies—
 - (a) Producing dramas of social value and not merely for entertainment and excitement.
 - (b) Training in useful hand work.

- (c) Dignity of labour particularly for gardening and house-work.
- (d) Love for social work and helping the needy.
- (e) A course of lectures on social diseases with particular stress on consequences on—(1) The individual. (2) The Family. (3) The Society. (4) The Nation.

At school leaving stage. (Elementary anatomy, physiology, hygiene should be compulsory at the middle school stage as the background for the above course).

C - Programmes for Community training:—

1. Educating the parents in shouldering their responsibilities for training their children in moral and social hygiene as suggested at 'A'.
2. Training in character building by giving right moral values by living the same by parents, teachers and leaders as example is more powerful and therefore always better than precept.
3. Community atmosphere conducive to living right values in life.

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