

On Doctoring -Ethical Issues

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"I don't give them hell. I just tell the truth and they think it is hell."

- Harry S Truman

Monetary economy has been anything but a boon to mankind. Rather, it is only after the monetary economy became the rule mankind has been suffering all kinds of ills. This has been studied scientifically in the Innu community off the coast of Saskatchewan, Canada, in the small islands of Innu land, as also in the isolated community of Italian immigrants living in a small village, Roseto, near New York. Monetary economy has given birth to the plastic card economy with its attendant hazards. The recent epidemics of suicide and divorce in America have a lot to do with this mindless growth of bland materialism. While money could buy anything, money finds it difficult to buy happiness.

Business is the other word for making profit. Medicine today has become a business and is taken by us to the market place; all those market forces influence the medical profession like any other sphere of human activity. Profit at any cost seems to be the latest *mantra*. Transparency and authenticity are given a go by. Most people in business fail to walk their talk. Cut throat competition seems to be the order of the day. Most people in business seem to think that having a hidden agenda is the right thing to do in business. The largest casualty

in business has been the common man. Moral standards have almost disappeared in the arena. Any one who makes money by any means is respected by society. Money power is the most effective weapon. Money makes people lose their sense of fair play and better judgment.

Large multinational corporations are the most degenerate in this area. Most of them commit heinous white collar crimes against society little realizing that it is they that contribute to all suffering on the planet. Many recent revelations validate the above claim. A cursory glance would satisfy the reader.

Tobacco barons had documentary evidence in their files, as revealed by the recent findings in the archives of some of the giants in the field, of the dangers of smoking for human health. They have been trying to pour billions of dollars for sports sponsorship with an altruistic façade of encouraging sports. Their real reason was to encourage smoking among young children. Their data did show that while an adult learning to smoke might smoke for ten to fifteen years before dying of tobacco damage, a child would at least smoke for twenty five years before meeting its maker in heaven. From their profit point of view the latter are better targets.

Large European alcohol manufacturers created the myth that mild drinking is good for human health, making use of the inexact science of epidemiology, which has been a

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total failure when applied to chronic illnesses although it helped mankind to find the causes of illnesses in the field of acute epidemics of infectious diseases. The truth is that even a drop of alcohol is not good for health. It is true, though, that mild drinkers are in better health compared to heavy drunkards, but the teetotalers have the best health prospects. A large WHO study report by two scientists showing the above facts did not see the light of the day, thanks to the money power of the interested players. Similar are the stories of the large pharmaceutical manufacturers.

Drugs with dubious records are being pushed for sale using all kinds of research data to falsify the truth. Technology applied to medical care is no exception. It is shocking to know that, on an average about 225,000 people die every year in the US because of medical interventions of which a good 100,000 die due to drug side effects! Nearly three million people suffer from chronic problems because of medical interventions, but the divine interventionists and their business masters sell falsehood and half truths day in and day out. A recent book by the former editor-in-chief the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Marcia Angell, *The Truth About Drug Companies* (Randpon House) bares all the hidden agenda of the drug companies in great detail.

The word humanism is a neologism. The name humanism can be applied to an ethic based on human nobility. Turned towards both study and action, it recognizes and exalts the greatness of human genius and the power of its creations, opposing the brute force of inanimate nature. What is essential remains the individual's effort to develop in himself

or herself, through strict and methodical discipline, all human faculties, so as to lose nothing of what enlarges and enhances the human being. Goethe wrote in the second part of the Faust: "Reach towards the highest form of existence by the dint of uninterrupted effort. Humanism lays the foundations of individual and collective morality; it establishes law and creates an economy; it produces a political system; it nourishes art and literature."

I used the word medical humanism to describe the need for humane touch in medical care delivery. Similarly, business needs to be humane for it to benefit mankind. As of now the profit driven monetary economy has made the rich richer and the poor poorer. The gulf has been widening even in the affluent countries in the west. This inverse-care-law would eventually destroy humanity. Even now the problems for both the rich and the poor seem to come from the opposite camp. While the rich are afraid of the poor since the latter are "the thugs, the muggers, the murderers, and the car jackers," the poor are afraid of not knowing where their next meal comes from because the rich take more than ninety per cent of the world's resources. Fear is the key for their unhappiness.

Unethical business, devoid of humanism, might be very profitable in the short term but in the long run it is bound to have its effects on the perpetrators of the crime. Business ethics is simply business humanism. 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you' is a good dictum. Until and unless the poorest of the poor get their needs of food, shelter and an opportunity to work met, this world would never be peaceful. Our short cut methods of

trying to destroy the terrorists and arrest and punish the criminals will not solve the problem. As long as oppression, suppression and denial persist crime will also thrive. The rich better read the writing on the wall before it is too late.

If the business world realizes the need for transparency and authenticity in their business they would be automatically making business very ethical. Ethical dealings are always legal as well, but all legal dealings that the business world dabbles in, need not be ethical in the first place! Most business houses take refuge in the legal protection that they think they get but they throw the ethical principles to the winds. Recent fall from grace of the non-banking financial institutions in India is a good example. Most civil courts have given them protection but the poor depositor who has put all his life's earnings for a peaceful evening in life has been forced to beg, borrow or steal to make both ends meet. Some of them are on the streets. However, most owners are either too affluent or, at least, are comfortably rich.

Economic crimes are on the rise in the name of business. While the large sharks cheat the world in the name of business dealings the smaller players amass wealth and disappear

from the scene one fine morning. Both seem to get legal protection but neither of them would have moral and ethical protection. Even large corporates are destroyed by the greed of the large players in the field. The recent UTI scandal in India is one such and there are many others. The largest contributors to the non-performing assets of the nationalized banks are the large business houses in India. This disease is not a tropical disease of India, it is universal.

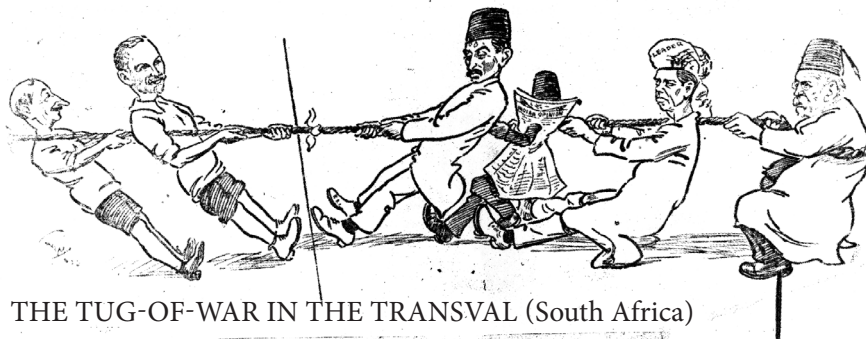
The only way this world could change for the better is by man changing himself and his near and dear ones. Unless man changes, the world does not change. Man could change by change in our educational system that could bring forth a new generation of ethical individuals who could make a difference in all walks of life, politics included. Business is not an exception. Primacy of man in every field is the core of humanism. Humanism is the basis of human health.

"There can be no happiness if the things that we believe in are different from the things that we do."

- Freya Stark



The exploiters & the exploited - a Gandhi Cartoon of 1907



It's is time the exploiters are pulled to the side of humanism through collective public efforts.