

LAUNCH OF

THE JANKI FOUNDATION

In the elegant surroundings of the Royal College of Physicians in London, a new chapter in the history of medicine was opened with the launch on December 10th of the Janki Foundation for Global Health Care. This UK-registered charity aims to act as a focus for a world-wide movement towards the restoration of spirituality and holistic approaches in health care.

The event brought together over 200 people, mainly doctors and health workers, and including business leaders and members of both Houses of Parliament. They held in common the belief that the narrowly scientific medical model predominant in the West, which addresses health issues primarily from a physical perspective, is proving inadequate. The meeting heard how patients often remain dissatisfied, physicians become disheartened, and health budgets are invariably over-stretched.

The new foundation is named after Dadi Janki, an 82 year old Indian spiritual leader who has overcome several critical illnesses in her own life, including tuberculosis, congestive heart failure, prolapsed disc and thyroid problems. In her presidential address, she told the launch meeting of how she has obtained the strength to transcend disease through spiritual awareness.

Dadi, who is the UK-based co-administrative head of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, has also made it her life's work to share this healing power of peace with others, and she spoke of the additional strength received from the love and good wishes that come in return.

"From childhood, I felt it was the power of prayer that could heal people, and when people were sick it was my heart's desire to serve them", she said. "It is my deep desire that souls of the entire world should come to know inner peace and love".

For that to happen, however, we also needed to relearn an ancient wisdom, that illness is a signal of some negative habits or actions. When the signal is understood and a commitment made to change, there need not be a feeling of suffering during a time of illness. When this is not understood, however, medicine loses its impact and illness may be prolonged.

The Janki Foundation is collaborating with interested individuals and institutions around the world in developing a model of health care that emphasises such spiritual dimensions, whilst utilising the huge benefits offered by modern science and technology. It is giving direct practical support to the work of the Global Hospital and Research Centre, a hospital and health awareness/preventative programme pioneering holistic approaches to health care for people amongst rural Rajasthan, an impoverished part of India.

This cross-fertilisation of perspectives and achievements from East and West was welcomed by the guest of honour, His Excellency Professor Dr George Kirya, High Commissioner for Uganda to the UK. He said that if the fertile ground of the South – especially Africa – were included, "we will have a global health care system, the best in contemporary medicine". The need for a more humane perspective to be given during the training of doctors was emphasised by Dr Sarah Eagger, chair of the British Holistic Medical Association and a senior lecturer at the Imperial College School of Medicine, London University. "Medical education today really does not have any idea what a human being is" she said. "There is no consistent model, save the 'biological' one that describes the parts of the body in magnificent detail", but had nothing to say about the sum of those parts.

Dr Eagger added: "As a medical student we were taught a lot about what to 'do', but I was often left feeling acutely the lack in my training of how to 'be' with people in their times of suffering and pain. How to be with someone when they are dying, or when breaking bad news; how to feel

connected with yourself, and to sustain and re-energise yourself in a profession that requires a lot of giving.”

Through meditation, Dr Egger said, she had learned “how to explore that silent proverbial space in which fears are born and to be able to face them by coming to know a source of peace and love and strength.”

Having known and observed Dadi Janki for 20 years, and seen her undergo many illnesses, “I have seen she truly is the embodiment of holistic principles. She is also a scientist of the soul and has conducted her research into the incredible potential and power of the mind, that goes beyond the brain. The evidence is seen in the way she is able to uplift herself and others.”

Dr Hansa Raval, a United States cancer specialist and chairman of the Diagnostic and Cancer Research Centre at the Global Hospital, felt that the way to practise in a holistic manner could not be taught in medical school. “The medicine we need to bring into this world is care,” she said. “A patient is not just a machine. Dadi Janki’s love and caring for me has taught me so much about how to practise medicine.”

A reading on the origins of holistic health care, delineating its roots in ancient India as well as Greece, was delivered by Clarke Peters, actor and musical director, and Professor Franco Bottazzo, of the Royal London and St Bartholomew’s Hospitals, who is a scientific and medical adviser to the foundation. Other advisers present included Professor Donald Barltrop, an expert on child health, who introduced the programme participants; and Dr Peter Fenwick, senior lecturer at the Institute of Psychiatry, London, and chairman of the Scientific and Medical network, a group of doctors and scientists seeking to deepen understanding by fostering intuitive as well as rational ways of learning about the world.

Video profiles were shown of the Global Hospital, and of Dadi Janki herself. There was also a dance, “East and West”, by Dipty Khatry and Nonie Bradley, and a performance of “Silent Night” by the Schola Cantorum of the Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School led by Clarke Peters. Marneta Viegas, a mime artist and children’s entertainer, created a beautiful atmosphere of stillness by standing, statue-like, in a representation of Hygieia, the Greek goddess of health.

Powerful vibrations of peace accompanied a period of silence following Dadi Janki’s address. A short recital by Anup Kumar Biswas, world-renowned solo cellist, added to the sense of occasion.

Patrons of the new foundation include Earl Baldwin of Bewdley, chairman of the Parliamentary Group for alternative and Complementary Medicine, Lord Norrie, a Parliamentarian who has specialised in environment and health issues, and Manibhai Patel, MBE, a prominent Ugandan Asian and founder member of the Social Democratic Party.

In a vote of thanks, Lord Norrie paid tribute to the enthusiasm and commitment of Dr Ray Bhatt, chairman of the foundation, a London specialist in vitamin deficiencies.

Lord Norrie, who is hosting a follow-up meeting of the foundation at the House of Lords in London on January 15th, said two distinct aims had emerged.

One was that the Global Hospital, its research centre and related institutions would serve as a flagship for developments in holistic health care.

The other was that the launch of the new foundation would attract like minds, bringing about a much wider understanding and application of holistic approaches to global healthcare.