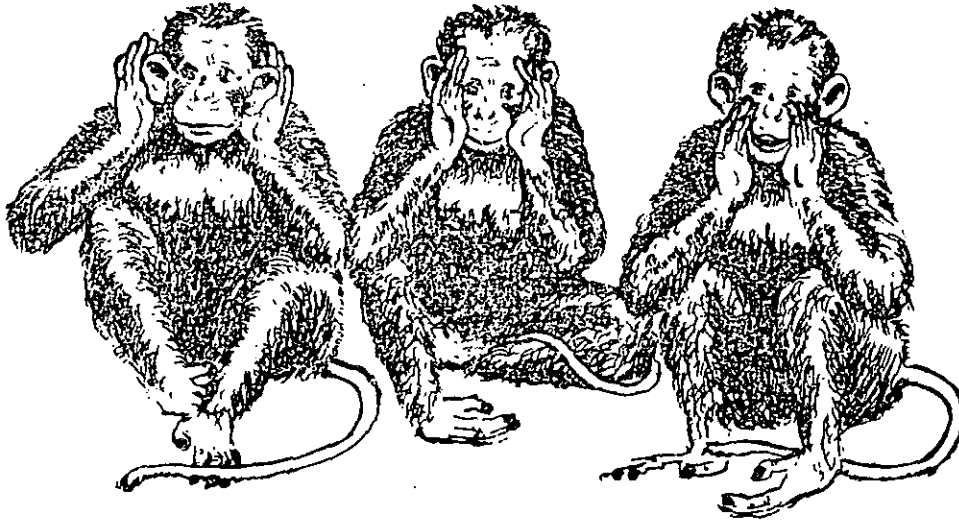


HEARD, SEEN & SPOKEN



Baidyaraj has been warned by the Chief Editor for making this column too frivolous. Consequently readers may note some change and departure from the normal in the contents of this Heard, Seen and Spoken contribution. The change is not so drastic as to make this column into one entitled Unheard, Unseen and Unspoken, nevertheless it is a reformed Baidyaraj who is at the typewriter.

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In a Time magazine I read about an interesting development of the Abortion Act, 1967 in England. This has led to the springing up of a number of houses, not of illrepute, but 'registered ones' where one can get abortions done and all above board. The article went on to state that women, desirous of having abortions, fly by night and PRESTO they can get one done. This has lead to an influx of tourists of this category.

We in this country are all rather keen to increase the number of tourists coming to Nepal. My suggestion as Baidyaraj would be to form a solid lobby of people who are rather broadminded about legalising abortions. Such a step would not only increase the Tourist Trade and its associated branches but it will also keep our obstetricians and gynaecologists busy.

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Doctors in this country are providing our populace with a service which if not the cheapest, is certainly one of the cheaper ones of the world. The trouble in this country is

not that the doctors' service is expensive but that drugs, especially the more recent antibiotics cost too much. So I was happy to note that our Royal Drug Research Laboratory is bringing out a brand of NE antibiotics. This like the one imported from a neighbouring country is foreign to the Eastern shores of Asia. Both have however the same origin in that they come from Europe. If therefore one thinks that these products are sub-standard then it means that we doctors do not even believe that Nepalese are capable of weighing 250 or 500 mgms as the case may be. Seeing that this is a semi State concern, trying to bring down the cost of drugs I think that doctors should go out of their way to prescribe its products. After all the British National Health Service also imports these same antibiotics from Europe mainly Poland and Italy, because capsules brought from these countries cost much less than those imported from the New World or for that matter produced in England itself.

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What I intended to write about was about the cheapness of Doctor's services but instead I digressed and wrote about the cost of drugs. However I feel that doctors when visiting houses on calls should try to discourage a habit which is being propagated at quite a fast pace. The practice in question is that of bringing patients plus, plus to be seen by the doctor. The patient's party probably believes it is cheaper by the dozen— but think of the poor harrassed overworked doctor. Perhaps how to deal with this sort of situation might be a suitable topic for discussion in the 'Letter-Box' column of the Journal. Would readers please oblige.

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There is a certain amount of dissatisfaction among young doctors who have recently applied to go for Post-Graduate Training. Instead of their mother-like Health Dept. doing the selection for the Postgraduate training they find that a Step-Mother namely the Education Dept. is doing the selection. This to me seems to be nothing more than passing the buck by the Health Dept.

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I think that the Nepal Medical Association should also have little coat lapel badges. Most of the various departments have coat lapel pennants showing H. M. The King. A suitably designed one, representing the Crown together with an emblem of the Medical Association will I am sure be heartily welcomed by all the doctors.

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Ours is a land of contrasts. The elite of Kathmandu pride themselves on being a 'WITH IT' set and this is partly true when one considers the drastic change that has occurred in the Nepalese way of life since 2007 B. S. Family planning is a way of life and even men in their early twenties come to be castrated, sorry I mean vasectomised. The root of all this I think is the fact that in the hilly districts of our country child marriages are still prevalent. The Gorkhapatra reported the other day that the parents of a 7 year

old girl and an 11 year old boy plus the High priest concerned and the 'Damai' (musician) had been arrested for trying to get these children married off. To me it seems that child marriages, though prohibited, still continue and so obviously the law must be more strictly enforced. Rather than vasectomy of the youngsters the obvious answer is to popularise later marriages. The necessity of this is amply illustrated in the words of one of our colleagues, who once said that he had only 4 children. Someone else who knew he really had 6 then asked him how he could disown 2 of his own children. He candidly replied, "Well, we were so young when we married that it was only after 2 children were born that my wife and I found out what was causing it".

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What is good enough for Mayo Clinic is not good enough for Bir Hospital. One of the superiors here had wooden Examination Table (replica of those at Mayo Clinic) built at Balaju. After a couple of years use these have now been replaced by metal ones on Godrej Lines. Our outdoor too, we believe was designed on the same lines as Mayo. All our Outdoor rooms are too crowded and there is hardly any breathing space. This must mean that either the big and bigger Americans must be packed like sardines in their Out-patients Department or that the Mayo Clinic must have very few patients indeed.

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One of our colleagues has written a book on CAR DRIVING. In it he tells the story of how he was stopped by the police and told not to smoke whilst driving a car. Innocently he asked the police officer the reason for having ash containers in cars and naturally the poor officer was at a loss what to reply back. Our colleague rightly insists that the police should pay more attention to drunken drivers and thus help towards preventing accidents not only in Kathmandu but in various parts of the country.

Another rise in Road Traffic Accidents has been noted amongst motor-cyclists. I think that the police should make it compulsory for all motor-cyclists and scooter-riders to wear 'Crash' helmets. The slogan should be 'NO HELMET-NO LICENSE'. As the number of doctors who ride motor-cycles or scooters is quite appreciable, what could be better than for them to start the ball rolling by wearing crash helmets when they take to the road.

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Two years ago mobile units of doctors and surgeons made East and West Tours of the country. At that time I had hailed this as our Flying Doctor Service on a limited scale. Whether it was due to lack of aviation fuel or lack of funds this arrangement had stopped. Now I hear that it is to be resumed. I hope that it becomes a permanent part of the health services provided. Doctors will then not only be serving their countrymen, but will also get a good opportunity to see parts of Nepal. The motto for Nepalese doctors should be "HAVE 'SCOPE-WILL TRAVEL".

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Doctors like spirits and the two go together. This is well brought out in the story about one of our colleagues who went home one night reeking of alcohol. His wife not familiar with all these odours of the 20th Century remarked "You must have had a hard evening's work at the the hospital today. There is a methylated spirit odour all over you".

But talking about spirits I read an item in the Rising Nepal of 31st March. I wonder if it was intended as an April Fool joke but got inserted in the paper one day earlier by mistake. The news item from Tokyo went on to suggest that a 250 year old 'OLD PARR' bottle of whisky, discovered in Japan had been sold for 30,000 Dollars or at the existing rate of exchange for about 3 lakhs of Nepalese Rupees. The bottle of whisky is due to be shown at the International Trade Fair at Harumi, Tokyo before leaving Japan. It has been bought by one Mr. G. Pinkerton, President of Macdonald Greenlith-almost certainly of the United States.

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Here in Nepal it seems that one does not officially live at all until one reaches the age of College entry or is about to embark on some career or venture. So most Nepalese are at least 15 years old when they go to get a Citizenship paper. Even at this crucial moment they do not have any proof of birth, and someone who was not present at the time of birth has to vouchsafe to this. It is high time therefore that registration of Births and Official Birth Certificates are issued. Where there are hospitals they can easily supply the proof of birth. In other cases it should be the Gaon Panchayat that does this and on the strength of this the 104 Zilla Panchayats should give the official Birth certificate and register the birth.

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From writing about births I go on to the question of deaths. We are told that 24,000 tourists visited Nepal in 1967, 34,000 in 1968 and that by 1970 the figure is expected to reach 100,000. A substantial number of these foreigners visit Pashupatinath surroundings. Whilst there, they get the stench of burning human flesh and witness the final rites. It would be far better if the Nagar Panchayat, not only of Kathmandu, but of other important towns like Biratnagar, Nepalganj, etc imported electric furnaces from Japan and installed them at suitable places. No smell involved and the furnace reduces to ashes a body in 3 minutes flat. Perhaps the Public Health Dept. should prod the Nagar Panchayats in this direction. The question of foreign exchange is a minor one for such furnaces are required in the country and are certainly far more beneficial than the plastic monkeys or Santa Claus currently available.

BAIDYARAJ