



# Dementia

**ABSTRACT:** The author explains the origin of the human & its relation to the memory from its origin from the greek & latin language. Beautifully penned to indicate the distinctions of human mind which can be owed to the current lifestyle & evolution of the modern world.

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Mock not, looking at  
The cartoons exhibited.  
The artist has placed  
Mirrors all around.  
The Gujju wit above is mirrored in a Latin proverb: "Every madman thinks all other men are mad". So before writers of this piece and its readers make up their mind on human mindlessness learnedly called dementia, it pays to pause and realize that at the Bronx Museum in New York, the specimen exhibiting the "Most dangerous animal on the Earth" is but a full-length mirror. Salvatore Quasimodo, the Sicilian poet-n-Nobel-laureate, saw the human-savage in full form during World War 2 and summed up the *Homo (un)sapiens* as "extermination-minded, loveless, Christ less." Shakespeare presaged the forgoing by half a millennium to diagnose human dementia that expectedly has worsened to the point of being able to exterminate all life on the Planet Earth. Shakespeare's pathos is pertinent, when he poetizes that the human ape's antics make the Angels perpetually weep.

Having so humbled ourselves, we, on either side of this paper, are well-poised to pontificate on the theme of this issue, starting with terms. From Sanskrit *manas* came Latin *mens*, *mentia* and Greek *menos* giving medical men two (seemingly) learned terms *amentia* and *dementia*, indicating primary absence and de indicating a secondary deprivation. The lexicons have no room for eumentia,

hypermentia (mania), hypomentia, or dysmentia, the first being so rare, and the rest so very common.

In the age-old craze of marks-n-medals, we have lost that sight of the fine-but-distinction between *intellect* and *brilliance*. *Intellect* is from *inter+telligere* = to read between the lines, to have *viveka*, or wisdom. Mankind has had intellectuals countable on finger-tips, for they all strove for universal welfare. The rest of us – Einstein, Newtons, not excluded – have been brilliant, being the makers of AK-47 and Atom Bomb, of chemicals that gutterize Ganges to give you orgasmic rise of Sensex, politicians and polluters. Lest it be forgotten that air, water, food, and sunshine are beyond any human brilliance that does all it can to storage this quartet. If the recent Nobels to environmentalists is any indication, we are but a decade away from cataclysms all man-made. Man is innately dementic. What now follows are some medical nuances of a condition more easily pronounced than comprehended. The cruelty that modern medical experimentation has helped on our animal fraternity is enough for them to change Linnean *Homo sapiens* into *Homo dementus*.

Dementia has been defined as "chronic mental and emotional deterioration caused by organic disease." The same lexicon hastens to synonymize dementia with madness, with fully justifying the long preamble. Medically, dementia, to say the least, is of 16 types: Alzheimer's or presenile, Binswanger's



dementia learnedly called *encephalitis subcorticalis chronica*, dialysis dementia that befalls on humans on chronic dialysis, epileptic. Dementias are classified as psychosis, dementia myoclonica, dementia paralytica, dementia paranoids also called paranoid schizophrenia, dementia precox, dementia presenilitis, dementia pugilistica also called as Boxer's brain, secondary dementia, semantic dementia, senile dementia, terminal dementia and toxic dementia, in that alphabetical order.

Of wider and current interest is Alzheimer's disease, a dementia portrayed by Big B in the movie *Black*. Soon after birth, there is programmed apoptosis of brain neurons roughly at the rate of 25000 per day. Yet leaving for you 70% of your brain intact at 70 years of age, for each human is a Bill Gates in neuronal wealth. Since most of us do not use more than 5% of our brain, Koestler was led to describe human brain as the unsolicited (unappreciated) gift. So often a scan of an adult shows a shrunken brain showing multiple infarcts, but the fellow is thriving in all ways including creativity. It is just possible that the dwindling cerebral circulation compels the brain to jettison neurons that we do not use, hence exercising a remarkable economy whereby you can sing your way to the grave truly unmindful of the bits of mind that you have lost. Nature is discreet even in her seeming diseasefulness. It is not generally realized that Parkinsonism, aptly but oxymoronicly called *paralysis agitans*, is a dementia resulting from loss of neurons that power and brake your movements. To grow is to be dementic. So take it easy.

But in a select few, things go wrong and you have someone with a body that goes on and on and a mind that goes off and off. The only available drug,

no matter what pathy you propitiate, is compassion, care, patience and fortitude. No genetics, nor any pharmacology are of avail. You see such a person and you realize that all your love, ideation, genius and what have you are but *Maya's* mirage. In *Ecclesiastes* a preacher's book of the Old Testament, the author exhorts humanity to wisdom, industry and the fear of God only to conclude that it is all *Vanitas vanitatum*, Vanity of all vanities. Adi Sankaracharya (9<sup>th</sup> century AD), in *Bhaj Govindam* uses the phrase *Moodh mate* and Shakespeare, 600 years later the "Last scene of all/ That ends this strange eventful history/ Is second childishness and mere oblivion/ Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

What could be significantly contributing to the current epidemic of Alzheimer's dementia are the human folly of money as the measure of everything, every life, every moment so that all else that does not generate money is given a short shrift, and the human brain says, "OK Whatever you do not use, you lose." The other follies are medical, bordering on the tyrannical. Lady Nicotine, condemned as killer Tobacco, is a good preventive agent against Parkinsonism and Alzheimer's and there is no scientific evidence that it is keen on or capable of causing cancer. The other tragedy is cholesterol-free foods and the cholesterol-lowering statins. Do know that the myelin that protects human neurons is whopping 44% only cholesterol. You lower this only at the peril of the patient. But both such foods and drug fads are megabucks that make USA and India blind to the tragedy that the medicos are inflicting on the unthinking humankind.

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