International Day for Remembrance of Slave Trade and Its Abolition

The night of 22 to 23 August 1791, in Santo Domingo (today Haiti and the Dominican Republic) saw the beginning of the uprising that would play a crucial role in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. The International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition is intended to inscribe the tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade in the memory of all peoples. Bringing to light all aspects of slavery is essential to constructing an overall dispassionate vision of this tragedy.

For many people, this is the image that comes to mind when they hear the word slavery. We think of the buying and selling of people, their shipment from one continent to another and the abolition of the trade in the early 1800s. Even if we know nothing about the slave trade, it is something that we think of as part of our history rather than our present. But slavery isn’t just a thing of the past. Millions of women, children and men around the world are trapped in slavery, TODAY. Hasn’t slavery been abolished? Officially, yes. Today, under international law slavery is illegal. In practice, women from Eastern Europe are bonded into prostitution, children are trafficked between West African countries and men are forced to work as slaves on Brazilian agricultural estates. These people are enslaved because existing laws are not enforced.

What types of slavery exist today?

**Bonded labor:** a person becomes bonded when their labor is demanded as means of repayment of a loan or money given in advance. World-wide, millions of bonded laborers are caught in a cycle of debt and forced to work in conditions that violate their human rights.

**Forced labor:** any work that people are forced to do under threat of violence or other form of punishment.

**Child labor:** children are bonded, trafficked or forced to work as soldiers or domestic laborers, on plantations or in commercial sex work. Their physical vulnerability and lack of voice make children especially prone to danger in conditions which risk damaging their safety and psychological health. An estimated 80 million children are in the worst forms of child labour, with more still working full time at the expense of their education, leisure and personal and social development.

**Early and forced marriage:** women and girls who are married without choice. They are forced into a life of servitude, often marked by physical violence.

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Chinese Folk & Holistic Medicine

by Rollyne Wong, MIS Interpreter

Chinese folk medicine has a variety of categories, ranging from the physical, holistic to the culturally spiritual and/or religious. In Chinese culture, health is determined by the balance of “Chi” (vital energy) of the body, i.e. ‘hot’ energy or ‘cold’ energy. They are opposite, yet complementary forces, and must be kept in a balanced state. Healing is more associated with a patient’s beliefs, religious and spiritual philosophy.

Chinese also have a deep-rooted cultural and spiritual belief in “Karma” - retribution from a previous life and supernatural forces. Thus ill health is often blamed on such things. They believe that the soul is sometimes possessed by an overly friendly spirit, who needs company or a malevolent spirit, who wishes to take the life of the person. A Taoist priest or a Sharman is often used to go into a trance, say prayers and burn talismans or burn offerings to drive out or away these spirits in order for the patient to recover.

Here are some of the techniques used to treat patients:

1. **Cupping** (or moxtabustion) – Involves burning of a particular type of seaweed close to the skin and then pressing a cup (usually glass or porcelain) over the burning seaweed, creating a vacuum seal. This is meant to suck out bad “Chi” (vital energy) from the body, causing the patient’s discomfort. This technique leaves red round marks or bruises on the skin, which are often misinterpreted as abuse.

2. **Scraping** – Generally a special instrument without sharp edges is used to give relief to aches and pain. Many times a Chinese porcelain spoon is used. If a spoon is not available, then a coin is used, and may cause an open breakage of the skin if too much force is inflicted. This too is often mistaken for abuse because of the redness of the skin.

3. **Refloxology** – It is believed that this practice began in 400 BC, but others believe that it began during the Shang Dynasty – 1600–1100 BC. Chinese people believe that all parts of the body is controlled by certain parts of the foot. Skilful pressure and massage can relieve ailments in a corresponding body part.

4. **Acupressure** – It is the manipulation of pressure points of the body, which affects emotions, tension, and physical conditions. This is to relieve ailment and aches and pains felt by the patient.

5. **Acupuncture** – This form of healing is said to date back over 8,000 years and stems from the Taiost tradition. The observation of “Chi” (vital energy) both Yin and Yang, was practiced by the use of fine needles in specific nerve and circulatory points of the body to relieve a patient’s illness or to enhance or maintain health. Acupuncture continues to play an important role in the Chinese Medical System, and its popularity is growing in many parts of the world.

6. **Chinese herbal medicine** is a common method used by the Chinese population all over the world for assorted maladies. It is believed that although beneficial effects seem slower than in the Western medicine, it has a much more sustained benefit in the long run.