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*Splagchnizomai*  
(The Greatest of These is Compassion)

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If I treat patients with the calling of God and the knowledge of men, but do not have compassion, I am only an ectopic heartbeat or a convulsive movement.

If I have the gift of healing and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have the mind to clinically reason, but do not have compassion, I am nothing.

If I give all I possess to the sick and give over my body and mind to the hardship that follows the profession that I may boast, but do not have compassion, I gain naught.

Compassion is loving, compassion is considerate. It does not terrify, it does not oppress, it is not brutal. It does not degrade, it is not egoistic, it is not ferocious, it keeps no record of grievances.

Compassion does not delight in suffering, but rejoices with comfort. It always tolerates, always calms, always reassures, always empathises.

Compassion never fails. But where there are therapies, they will cease; where there is innovation, it will be outdated; where there is knowledge, it will be updated.

For we know in part and we treat in part, but when holism comes into care, what is in part is completed.

When I was a novice, I talked like a novice, I thought like a novice, and I reasoned like a novice.

When I became a physician, I put the ways of the novice behind me. Now I am enlightened in part; then I shall enlighten fully, even as I am fully enlightened.

And now these three remain: Care, Competence and Compassion. But the greatest of these is Compassion.

*Splagchnizomai (σπλαγχνίζομαι) is the Greek word for Compassion meaning 'stirring of the inward parts'. Compassion is equivalent to the Christian concept of 'Agape' ἀγάπη (unconditional love) and 'Maitri' मैत्री (loving-kindness) of the Dharmic tradition. The three pillars central to the practice of medicine are Care, Competence, and Compassion. However, of those three, Compassion is the most important, which when lost, all else is of naught. This ode is based on the Homily on Love (Charity) found in Corinthians 1:13.*

## **About the Author**

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