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EDITORIAL

ON MIXING REMEDIES IN HOMOEOPATHIC PRACTICE

The late Dr. Diwan Jaichand once remarked, that the human body was not a post office that it could sort out the ingredients in a mixture and deliver them at their respective destinations. He was referring to the mode of allopathic practice prevalent in those days when physicians freely mixed many different chemical substances and prescribed them as remedies for diseases. A renowned allopathic physician himself, he very soon realised the futility of employing such mixtures and discarded them from his practice in favour of a single remedy prescribing as propounded by Hahnemann in Homoeopathy. It was an important turning point in his life. But he was so deeply convinced by the argument in homoeopathic philosophy, that not only he opted to practise Homoeopathy through the rest of his life, but he practised it strictly according to the tenets peculiar to that system.

Quite the opposite of this phenomenon is what one witnesses in the homoeopathic field today. More and more homoeopathic physicians have taken to mixing of the remedies in their practice and delivering them as homoeopathic prescriptions. They claim satisfactory results. None can challenge their experiences since the efficacy of combinations is amply proved by the way they are flooding the market and get briskly sold! We have them coming to us even from the land where Hahnemann once lived and preached, *similia simplex minimum*.

It is curious to observe how this conflicting situation has been created. What led the homoeopathic physicians to the concept of mixing remedies. Obviously, it was their inability to see the entire picture of the disease in a single remedy. Whereas, when they divided the disease picture into parts, each one of the parts corresponded with the parts of different remedies. So, in order to achieve the totality the parts belonging to those different remedies were brought together by combining them. At its face value, the proposition sounds quite logical. But it needs verification especially in the light of the experience drawn from the 'Gestalt' which clearly lays, that the whole is not merely a combination of its parts but is something more than that; the whole

having its own properties quite independent of the sum total of the individual properties of each of the components. This experience gets easily corroborated in everyday life. For instance, the properties of water are manifold and quite different from a combination of the independent properties of hydrogen and oxygen of which it is composed. Likewise, even when all the ingredients of milk are mixed in adequate proportions, it fails to produce the mother's milk! What is responsible for this anomaly?

Nature expresses through quality and quantity. While the concept of quantity is, by and large, perceptual, quality is conceptual and therefore, severely limits a study through analytic approach. The quality of a piece of art for instance, is purely a subjective phenomenon. Its apprehension by the mind presupposes, amongst others, the possession of knowledge of that discipline and the past experiences in the field. The quality of the image produced in the mind depends on its range and capacity for resolution, to abstract the essence of what the sensory perception collectively carries to it. Totality, in Homoeopathy, is both a qualitative and quantitative concept. Unless this aspect is clear, one would easily mistake it for the sum total of the signs and symptoms, which it is not. It is the sum total of the *peculiar, characteristic, rare and strange symptoms*, the latter description imparting to it the qualitative basis.

Unfortunately, the human mind gets easily attracted by the quantitative aspect. It gets lost in the numbers and begins to count heads until the heads start rolling. It gets caught in the forms without being able to perceive the structure underlying them. It runs an account of the attributes without getting at the traits. It is this serious difficulty that is responsible for the fragmentary thinking. Fragmentation and totality are opposite concepts. Where totality is the measure stick to gauge the similarity between two phenomena, fragmentation raises its head and distorts the image. A mind confused thus, loses its delicate balance between the concepts of quality and quantity, and gets swayed by the latter, true to its basic character of treading the path of least resistance. What follows is a game of building blocks in which, the physician desperately tries to arrange and rearrange the blocks but finds to his dismay, that every time a topsy-turvy image is produced. This produces a sense of insecurity in him. The defence mechanisms are geared up. Denial, projections and rationalization begin to govern actions. The need for a totality, for that matter, even the need for applying the law of similars is questioned. Once the law is dispensed with, automatically, the concept of mixing remedies is rationalized and that is where we stand.

The other factor that is troubling physicians is the time needed for estimating the patient's problem, so that it becomes possible for them to arrive at a judgment in respect of its resolution. "Treat the patient and not the disease" is the axiom often quoted in the philosophy. To get to know the personality of a patient would again impel the physician to make a qualitative estimate of his behaviour and actions in the various spheres such as, his family, place

of work and in the society. It would draw heavily on the physician's time to indulge in a detailed analysis of that order. And, how many patients would it become possible for him to examine in a day if he were to record a detailed history in respect of each one of them? In such a situation where patients crowd round a physician, with problems acute and chronic, the only way he can reach all of them is by alleviating the more distressing problems they present. When there is more than one problem troubling a patient at a single moment of time and their expressions do not fit with those of a single remedy, the physician combines the remedies covering all of them and prescribes.

What can such practice result in? The human system, like any other system, is capable of throwing up multiple expressions under stress. These constitute the total response of the system to the stimuli although, over a period of time, they may get localized. This is evident from the vague generalized disturbances felt by the patient in the initial phases of the disease, when it is regarded as the prodromal phase, and again, in the later stages of the evolution of the disease, when there is a progressive structural damage. Since the expressions belong to the system as a whole, any therapeutic measure also, necessarily has to take into account the totality of what the system is constituted of namely, the structure, form and functions. Any attempt directed to stifle the expressions alone may appear to give the patient a transient relief, but continues to damage its structure and contributes to the total destruction of the system instead of preserving it, a concept far removed from the ideal of a Hahnemannian cure. Mixing remedies in homoeopathic practice demands justification in the light of the foregoing experience.

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