

HISTORY OF THE INTRODUCTION AND SPREAD OF HOMŒOPATHY IN INDIA*

DR. B. K. SARKAR, M.B., D.M.S.

The story of Hahnemann's life is the story of discovery, development and diffusion of the principles and practice of Homœopathy in the world. Born on the 10th April 1755 Hahnemann graduated in Medicine in 1779. After practising the orthodox system of medicine for a few years he came to doubt its rationality and therapeutic efficacy. Out of disgust he almost gave up the practice and tried to earn his living by some literary pursuits, e.g. translating medical books into German language. In 1790, while translating Cullen's *Materia Medica* he discovered the fever-producing property of Cinchona bark, and this was to him what the falling apple was to Newton and the swinging lamp in the Baptistery at Pisa, to Galileo. From this single experiment his mind appears to have been impressed by the conviction that the pathogenetic effects of medicines would give the key to their therapeutic powers. He formed a tentative hypothesis in his mind that the specific curative property of a drug lies in its power of producing similar symptoms in a healthy individual, i.e. the drugs have sickness-making as well as sickness-curing properties, the sickness being the same. For corroboration of his provisional theory he searched the records of the *Materia Medica* of his time and found that nearly all the so-called specific cures were effected by drugs which produced similar symptoms in healthy human beings. For six years thence he continued his researches and experiments till in 1796 he was in a position to write about fifty drugs (which specifically cured the disease-conditions the similar pictures of which they produced when administered to healthy individuals) and suggested a new way of ascertaining the specific curative powers of a drug. He then converted the induction to deduction and said: "*Let likes be treated by likes*" (*Similia*

* Read at the 3rd Session of the West Bengal State Homœopathic Federation held at Krishnagar.

Similibus Curentur). Thus Homœopathy was born in 1796 when Hahnemann published an article in Hufelands Journal under the title "Essay on a New Principle for Ascertaining the Curative Powers of Drugs". The doctrines of Homœopathy were attempted to be formulated, for the first time, by Hahnemann in his famous article "The Medicine of Experience" published in 1805—and the complete systematization of the principle and practice of the Homœopathic Art of Healing was effected with the publication of Hahnemann's *Organon of Medicine* in 1810. In the meantime Hahnemann, the Homœopath in the making, was elucidating and firmly establishing his novel ideas through some articles, e.g. "Æsculapius in the Balance" (1805); "Medicine of Experience" (1805); "On the Value of Speculative Systems of Medicine" (1808); "Observations on the Three Current Methods of Treatment" (1809); and "The Spirit of Homœopathic Doctrine of Medicine" (1813).

Curiously enough, homœopathy did not take much time to cross the seven seas and touch the soil of India where it soon found a favourable climate to thrive. Round about 1810 a German physician and geologist landed in India, with some of his countrymen, for geological investigations, perhaps at the instance of his Government. This German gentleman remained for a time in Bengal distributing homœopathic medicines to his Indian servants and other poor men. There is also some reference to one Dr. Mullens, of the London Missionary Society, who was known to distribute homœopathic medicines to the people of Bhowanipore, Calcutta.

Though it is difficult to fix the date of the advent of Homœopathy in India, circumstantial evidence exists which proves that in the years before 1852 this system of treatment was extensively practised by amateurs in the Indian Civil and Military Services and by other gentlemen; and the success that attended their practice, both upon Europeans and Indians, was such as to astonish the practioners themselves and all who witnessed it (vide *Calcutta Review*, January 1852). That this therapeutic system came to be practised in India when Hahnemann was alive in Paris is known from a book, published in London in 1852 by John Martin Hœnigberger, late physician to the Court of Lahore, under the

sonorous title *Thirty-five Years in the East, Adventures, Discoveries, Experiments and Historical Sketches, relating to Punjab and Kashmere, in connection with Medicine, Botany, Pharmacy, etc., together with an original Materia Medica: and a Medical Vocabulary in four European and five Eastern Languages*. It is not known for certain when Hœnigberger first came to India but for some years up to about 1860 he practised in Calcutta and was chiefly known here as the 'Cholera Doctor'. He wrote that he learnt homœopathy from Hahnemann himself during his first return to Europe after his travels in the East. He met Hahnemann at Paris in 1835. He revisited India in the spring of 1839 and took up the treatment of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab. Homœopathic medicine prescribed to Maharaja by Hœnigberger had magical effect in the beginning but the selfishness and jealous hostility of the Indian Hakims and Kavirajes spoilt the case and led to the persecution of homœopathy on its early introduction into India and smothered it for a time.

Round about 1846 Homœopathic Hospitals were started by Surgeon Samuel Brooking, a retired medical officer, at Tanjore and Paducuta in South India under the patronage of the Rajas of those States. In November 1851 a "Native Homœopathic Hospital and Free Dispensary" was started in Calcutta under the patronage of the Hon'ble Sir John Hunter Littler, Deputy Governor of Bengal and President of the Council of India; and Dr. Tonnere, a French Allopath by education but converted to homœopathy by conviction and practice, was appointed physician in charge of the hospital. It is curious to know that this doctor was appointed the first Health Officer of the town of Calcutta. But this hospital had a short existence and Dr. Tonnere, with all his zeal and faith in homœopathy, failed to secure a firm footing in Calcutta. About this time some amateurs in the civil and military services had been practising homœopathy with great success in Calcutta. One name shines most conspicuously and it is that of Mr. Ed. D'Latour, one of the Puisne Judges of the Sudder Dewani Adalat. Mr. Latour treated many cholera cases in which the mortality was only 30%, as recorded in the *British Journal of Homœopathy* for July 1854. He made a convert of his immediate subordinate, a Deputy Magistrate, Maulavie Ziauddin

Hosein, who in his turn became an amateur practitioner, doing good to many. About this time or shortly afterwards, two medical officers in Government service, Dr. Cooper and Dr. J. R. Russel, stationed in Fort William, were known to admire homœopathy and practise it; and also, one Mr. H. Ryper, a Military pensioner of the subordinate service who stayed at Cooley Bazar, Kidderpore used to distribute homœopathic medicines, free of cost, Mr. Ryper received encouragement from Capt. May, a staff pensioner who lived at 1, Hastings Street just off the Kidderpore Bridge and was a great admirer and advocate of homœopathy.

During this period a remarkable personality appeared in Calcutta who had much to do with the establishment and spread of homœopathy. He was Babu Rajen Dutta, a man noted for his erudition, philanthropy and social service. It was Babu Rajen Dutta who brought Dr. Tonnere to Calcutta and bore all his travelling expenses; he was chiefly instrumental in founding the Native Homœopathic Hospital and Free Dispensary and in helping Dr. Tonnere in his homœopathic practice in Calcutta. As the Hospital did not last long and Dr. Tonnere did not prove himself to be a successful homœopathic practitioner, Rajen Babu, an ardent believer in homœopathy, decided in the year 1861 to practise homœopathy himself. Homœopathy was given a fresh lease of life thenceforward. A landmark in the history of homœopathy in Calcutta, nay in India, was the year 1863 when Pundit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar of hallowed memory placed himself under the treatment of Rajen Babu and was miraculously cured of his chronic illness which had baffled all the leading Allopaths of the time. Another remarkable cure was effected by Rajen Babu when the illustrious Raja Sir Radhakanta Deb Bahadur of Shovabazar Rajbati was cured of gangrene in his foot with homœopathic medicines. These cures made a great sensation in the town and paved the way for the establishment and propagation of homœopathy in Calcutta, the leading town of India at that time. The 16th February 1867 has been a memorable date in the history of the medical profession in this country when Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar, an illustrious medical man of his time, who had secured the M.D. degree of the Calcutta University in 1863 and became Joint-President of the British Medical Association.

Calcutta Branch in 1866, read a paper "on the supposed uncertainty in Medical Science and on the relationship between disease and their remedial agents" in a meeting of the said Association and publicly declared his faith and conviction in homœopathy. Under the tutelage of Rajen Babu, Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar took to homœopathy; and as he was a star of the first magnitude in the medical firmament of the then Calcutta, he enhanced the prestige and established the scientificity of homœopathy to the scientifically minded intelligentsia of the country to such an extent as could not have been done by any other man of his time. During 1863-1864 Dr. Berigny, another French homœopathic doctor, came to Calcutta and set up his homœopathic practice. He left Calcutta after a few years and died on his way home. Dr. B. L. Bhaduri, L.M.S., the father-in-law of the great Dr. Pratap Ch. Majumder, was converted to homœopathy under the influence of Dr. Salzar of the University of Vienna, who came to Calcutta in 1867 and carried on his homœopathic practice with great success. Dr. P. C. Majumder graduated from Calcutta Medical College in 1878 and was converted to homœopathy through the influence of his father-in-law, Dr. B. L. Bhaduri.

The year 1867 is also memorable for the establishment of the Banaras Homœopathic Hospital with Sri Lokenath Maitra as physician-in-charge, who had been converted to homœopathy by Babu Rajendra Lal Dutta. Mr. Ironside, Civil and Sessions Judge at Banaras, was the patron of this institution; his wife was treated and cured with homœopathic medicines by Lokenath Babu.

In August 1869, a Homœopathic Charitable Dispensary was opened at Allahabad out of private subscriptions and Babu Priyanath Bose, a layman practising homœopathy, was put in charge of the institution. Thus homœopathy spread throughout the length and breadth of India even in that early period. The year 1870 is another important landmark in the history of homœopathy in India when His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur of Jaipur sent for Dr. Salzar of Calcutta for the treatment of his cataract, which was partially cured by the doctor with homœopathic medicines.

After Dr. Sircar and Dr. Salzar, Dr. Majumder became a

top-ranking Homœopath; and if Dr. Sircar enhanced the prestige of homœopathy, Dr. Majumder popularised homœopathy among our people by his tremendously successful practice, writing numerous books on homœopathy in English and Bengali, by editing the *Indian Homœopathic Review*, the oldest homœopathic periodical in India (after Dr. Sircar's *Calcutta Journal of Medicine*) and by establishing the Calcutta Homœopathic Medical College and Hospital which was maintained by him and Dr. D. N. Roy as long as they lived. Among his contemporaries we find a galaxy of eminent homœopaths, e.g. Dr. B. N. Banerji, Dr. D. N. Roy, Dr. Younan, Dr. Akshoy Kumar Dutt and Dr. Chandra Sekhar Kali. Their mantle fell on Dr. J. N. Majumdar, Dr. N. M. Choudhuri, Dr. Baridbaran Mukherji, Dr. S. K. Nag, and a host of others. At that time Calcutta could claim the best Indian homœopaths. Towards the beginning of the twentieth century several homœopathic institutions grew up and helped to foster homœopathic knowledge among their students who, in their turn, went to every nook and corner of Bengal as also to other provinces of India.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century another great man with a broad imagination and outlook entered the field of homœopathy as a Chemist & Pharmacist. He was Sri Mahesh Ch. Bhattacharyya who was a pioneer in selling good quality medicines at a very cheap rate thus making homœopathic medicines popular among the general public including the poor people of our country. He also compiled and published a pharmacopœia in Bengali and English with the help of which thousands have been able to enter the line and spread homœopathy to the furthest corners of the country.

With the growth in popularity of homœopathy and dearth of properly qualified homœopaths undesirable elements forced themselves into the profession. Bogus institutions were started and bogus homœopathic degrees and diplomas began to be bought and sold to hoodwink the unwary public. Quackery in homœopathy thrived to any extent. Matters went from bad to worse, with the result that homœopathy began to be looked upon as something of a fraud and deception. Even the duly trained practitioners were despised by the orthodox school and the Govern-

ment did not pay any attention to the control and development of homœopathic training and practice. Homœopaths, good, bad and indifferent, abounded everywhere. Disunity amongst the homœopaths became the order of the day. Though there grew up a multitude of Homœopathic Associations all over the country, there was no co-ordination among them. A spirit of "laissez-faire" prevailed.

This was the situation which prompted a group of institutionally trained homœopaths to make efforts for the Government recognition of homœopathy with a view to control and guide homœopathic training and practice on right lines. A group of homœopaths put their shoulders to the wheel and briefed a large number of members of the Central Legislative Assembly to support and put up the first Homœopathic Resolution in Central Assembly (under British regime) and got it passed by a majority of votes in 1936. It gave an impetus to the Bengal homœopaths, who finally succeeded in inducing the Bengal Government to establish the General Council and State Faculty of Homœopathic Medicine on the 24th June 1941 by an executive order of the Governor. In this connection we gratefully remember the sacred name of the late Dr. Sarat Ch. Ghose, M.D. of Calcutta, who was largely instrumental in this matter. In fact this was the first State-sponsored Homœopathic Council in India. Other provinces started agitation for State recognition of homœopathy but their efforts bore no fruits owing to the continuance of the Second World War.

Informal talks and meetings were continued with the Central Government officials concerned, regarding homœopathy but not much progress could be made. At this juncture the All India Institute of Homœopathy was formed in the year 1944 with its Central Office at Delhi. The founder-members of the Institute were Dr. A. N. Mukherji of Calcutta, Dr. Dewan Jai Chand of Lahore, Dr. Daya Sankar Kayastha, Dr. J. P. Srivastava, Dr. S. P. Asthana and Dr. K. G. Saxena. Dr. Saxena has been the Founder General Secretary of the Institute since its inception. A provisional executive committee was selected. Extensive correspondence commenced with the then Health Minister of the Government of India. In December 1946 a deputation on behalf of

the Institute met Mr. Ghaznafar Ali Khan, the then Health Minister of India. The deputationists gave a clear picture of homœopathic practice and training in India and abroad and requested him to recognise and utilise homœopathy in the future health plans of India.

Indian Independence was inaugurated on the 15th August 1947 and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur became the first Health Minister of India. The representatives of the Institute met her on numerous occasions and impressed upon her the importance of giving practical shape to the proposals that had been submitted to her predecessor. Some of the important items in the draft proposal of 15-3-47 were as follows:

- (1) Recognition of homœopathy by Government in pursuance of the Homœopathic Resolution passed by the Central Assembly in 1936.
- (2) Starting of homœopathic hospitals and colleges in all provinces and setting up of an All India Board of Control.
- (3) Homœopathic Research Institute.
- (4) Facilities for homœopathic training in foreign countries.
- (5) Facilities for working on homœopathic lines during epidemics.
- (6) Facilities for post-graduate training classes in homœopathy for allopathic and other medical graduates.
- (7) Homœopathic dispensaries in villages and towns.
- (8) Homœopathic Drug Legislation.
- (9) Enquiry Committee to be appointed
 - (a) on the existing condition of homœopathy
 - (b) on the scope for its progress in future
 - (c) on ways and means to implement the recommendations and proposals, mentioned above.

However, the Health Minister felt that unless another resolution was passed by the Union Parliament, nothing could be done. Under these circumstances, the representative members of the Institute persuaded Mr. S. Samanta, Shri Mohon Lal Saxena, Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Lala Deshbandhu Gupta and a few other members of the Parliament to move for consideration of

the Homœopathic Resolution that was put up by the Congress Party on 17-2-1948 and the resolution was unanimously passed by the Union Parliament. The Government of India announced on 30-9-1948 the personnel of the Homœopathic Enquiry Committee together with its terms of reference. The Committee submitted its report in 1949. The Committee accepted the scientificity of homœopathic system of medicine and recommended its recognition to the Government. The Committee also recommended the formation of a Central Homœopathic Council.

A Committee was appointed by the Planning Commission wherein representatives of homœopathy were invited in 1951. The Commission accepted 5 out of 7 proposals put up by the homœopathic representatives of the Institute and these were incorporated in the report of the First Five Year Plan.

Events moved swiftly. The Government of India constituted an Ad Hoc Committee on Homœopathy in 1953, presided over by the Director General of Health Services, Ministry of Health. This Committee had six sittings between 1953 and 1956. This Ad Hoc Committee was replaced by an Advisory Body with the Secretary of the Ministry of Health as Chairman in 1956. The D. G. H. S., the Director of Medical Research and six homœopaths formed the Body. Dr. K. G. Saxena, Secy. of the Institute, was appointed Hony. Homœopathic Physician to the President of India. He has again been reappointed Hony. Homœopathic Physician to the present President.

Legislative enactments on homœopathy have been passed in all the major States except Madras. Homœopathic Legislative Acts were passed in U.P., Bihar, Delhi and Bombay in 1947, 1953, 1956 and 1959 (amended in 1960) respectively.

In May 1962 the Government of India appointed Dr. K. G. Saxena as Hony Homœopathic Adviser to the Ministry of Health, Government of India. The function of the Adviser is to help the Government of India with his considered opinions on all matters concerning homœopathy. Another landmark in the progress of homœopathy in India is the appointment by the President of India in September 1962, of a Homœopathic Pharmacopœia Committee under the Ministry of Health, with Dr. B. K. Sarkar, M.B., D.M.S. as Chairman of the said Committee.

We close this short résumé with a piece of good news that the Government of West Bengal have at last found their way to pass the Homœopathic System of Medicine Bill in both the Houses of the West Bengal Legislature. The 9th of September will remain a red-letter day in the annals of homœopathy in West Bengal when the said Bill with some amendments was finally passed. And the West Bengal Homœopathic System of Medicine Act, 1963 was passed on the 9th November 1963. Bengal, the home of homœopathy, the land of Babu Rajendra Dutta, Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar and a host of giant homœopaths who left behind them indelible footprints on the sands of time, has at last secured her proper recognition which was long overdue. With State recognition homœopathy in West Bengal will take a new turn and get a fresh lease of life and will occupy its rightful place in the Walhalla of Medicine for the good of suffering humanity.
