

METAMORPHOSIS OF AN ALLOPATH

DR. J. N. KANJILAL, M.B., D.M.S., CALCUTTA

My respected friend, Dr. Chandra Prakash, has demanded of me the story of my conversion to Homœopathy. Although I do not believe that this story will charm anybody, still I have got to respect the call of my friend.

As usual with any Allopathic student, during my Medical College career my mind was saturated with mechanical, materialistic ideas, notions and concepts, and with corresponding amount of abhorrence towards the absurdity of Homœopathy which, at that time, appeared to us as if claiming to cure disease by the administration of a drop of water from the river Hooghly after putting a drop of Nux Vomica into the Ganga at Hardwar. Homœopathy, at that time, appeared to me as a cent per cent hoax compared to which cult practice of Ojhas and Sadhus appeared to be more meaningful as the latter was dependent upon principles of suggestions, hypnotism and often supplemented by subtle properties of indigenous drugs.

But this Fool's Paradise of my mind received its first shock—and that a very rude one—when I became familiar with the books on Practice of Medicine. There, with respect to any particular disease, we had to go through dozens or scores of pages in studying the various aetiologies, theories and pathological discussions and speculations, all quite interesting as they were. But coming to the section of treatment we found in almost all the myriads of diseases, with barely few exceptions, written either virtually and too often actually and literally—treatment unknown or symptomatic. One day I charged one of my professors, "People will call us not for hearing speculative stories about the aetiology and pathology of their diseases of which we are learning plenty, but for prescription of the remedy by which they would get rid of the disease. Where to get that knowledge?" He gave me an evasive answer, "Go and

find out for yourself." This answer pricked the huge bubble of enthusiasm in my heart about the Allopathic therapeutics.

Still I desisted from getting disheartened and tried to console my mind with the thought that even if therapeutics was of little use still to my mind Surgery, Gynaecology and Midwifery were full of boon to human race. And it may be referred here, by the way, that the basic aim of my coming to medical line—against the liking of my guardians who wanted me to be an engineer for various reasons—was to be a specialist in Gynaecology and Obstetrics and to practise as such in mofussil—near about my native village—where there was dearth of really dependable doctors, what to speak of a specialist. And to fulfil this latter motto I had again to disoblige not only my guardians but also some of my Professors who wanted me to remain in Calcutta attached to my *alma mater* (Carmichael Medical College, now R. G. Kar Medical College) at least as a research worker (research was one of my hobbies in the student days and I had done some research on calcium while a resident scholar in Midwifery in the final year). As a private practitioner in mofussil, of course, by the demand of the situation, I had to modify my dream of special practice and turned into a general practitioner with special stress on Midwifery.

Anyway, my love for Midwifery and Gynaecology saved me from frustration at that time. But soon I came to realise that even these branches had too often to face therapeutical problems, e.g., in cases of dysmenorrhoea and various other gynaecological disorders resistant to operation; toxæmias of pregnancy, puerperal sepsis, mania, etc. of obstetrics. Still I maintained a vacant heart without much attraction to Allopathic therapeutics nor was I attracted to any other pathy. Even at this time my notion regarding Homœopathy was that it often enjoyed undeserved credit. Homœopaths were generally called after over-drugging with other systems of treatment. Any apparent improvement under their hands was really through negative channel—namely, suspension of all drugging. Still I could not believe that one or two drops of simple water or spirit could have any positive effect!

In such a bent of mind my ideas received the second surprising shock while a resident House Surgeon in the Sir Kedar-nath Maternity Hospital of our College. At this time I developed a little amount of practice (mostly honorary) attending to calls of those patients who somehow had developed a special confidence in me while remaining in hospital under my care. While attending to such a call—an ordinary case of puerperal sepsis in a middle class tenement—I was requested to examine a far worse case of puerperal sepsis in the room of adjacent co-tenant. Puerperal sepsis—it may be remembered—was at that time (thirties of the present century) a serious problem having practically no specific treatment. Advent of the sulphadiazine—Prontosil—only slightly improved the situation. In any case, the prognosis of this second case appeared to me really grave—entailing either death in a few days, or if that is averted, a prolonged suffering for some months and then a crippled life. With heavy and apprehensive heart I asked the party as to who was treating the case. They said it was Dr. Sanat Kumar Ghosh. Dr. Ghosh was a brilliant ex-student of my *alma mater* senior to me by about 10 years. We all loved and respected him for his amiable personality and student-union activities, especially in the dramatic section (I being the founder-Director of the College Orchestra). But we failed to appreciate his prudence in taking to the 'unscientific' line of Homœopathy after going through a creditable medical career. Anyway, I asked the party, "What is the opinion of Dr. Ghosh regarding the case?" They said, "Dr. Ghosh has said that he will cure the case and prescribe rice diet within 7 days." It was with great difficulty that I suppressed a sarcastic smile at this piece of blatant humbugism of Homœopathy manifested through Dr. Ghosh and said to myself, "Yes, the fate of the patient as well as of Homœopathy is most likely to be decided within 7 days" while evading my personal views to the party. But, alas! to my terrible surprise the outlook of the patient totally changed on the very third day and that without a single grain or minim. or c. c. of our 'scientific medicine' or any other medicine whatsoever and only by a few doses of 'Homœopathic water' and she did actually take rice diet with avidity on the fifth day.

and moved out to latrine on the very next day. I had to attend to my case daily and gratis only to follow up this shockingly interesting case. This event blew away like a gush of wind all the filthy air of prejudice against Homœopathy in the dungeons of my mind and forced me to a retrospection of some past events amongst which the most important was my recovery from a formidable attack of diarrhoea in my childhood at the hands of a village Homœopath. These events had been long buried in the dark corners of my mind and simply worn out by time factor and then over-covered by so-called scientific studies.

Alongwith the gush of wind this event brought in a flood of light to all my dark view of the field of therapeutics and a spirit of some hope in my vacant heart coming to be aware of the existence of an effective therapy really beneficial to human race.

Soon, on the advice of a Homœopath friend, I bought two books on Homœopathic Materia Medica, viz., Allen Key-notes and N. C. Ghosh's Comparative Materia Medica (Bengali). (I later realised that I was given an imprudent suggestion and ought to have been advised books like Nash's Leaders in Materia Medica as the primary text-book). But my initial enthusiasm was greatly damped on going into these books where I found all the medicines having all sorts of symptoms; any remedy being suitable for any and all diseases rather than being specific for certain groups of disease-like quinine for Malaria, antimony for Kala-azar, arsenic for Syphilis, and so on; selection of medicine depending on whether they affect the right side or the left side, whether the pain is of burning or aching or cutting or lancinating character, relieved by heat or cold, and all such flimsy data having absolutely no significance to my mind grounded in solid pathology. As a matter of fact, almost everything in the Materia Medica appeared to me badly confusing. Still I drudged on with the two books as it was not my habit to take up anything lightly and once taken to give up the same without seeing the end of it.

In this condition I started my private practice on 18th

February, 1938, at Daulatpur (Khulna)—a highly malarious locality. At this stage my mental make-up was as follows:—

(1) Brain crammed with certain facts of Homœopathic Materia Medica—quite innocent about the Organon and the Homœopathic Philosophy.

(2) Want of any personal experience or experimental evidence as to whether the facts in Homœopathic Materia Medica are true and effective in practice. And it is never my habit to accept or reject anything without personal evidence. So far my personal evidence carried me upto a conviction that pure Homœopathy is effective at least in certain cases where Allopathy was upto that time sterile but quite ignorant as to how the effects were produced; and as to whether the facts given in Materia Medica were true and dependable in the treatment of cases.

(3) Not yet completely won over from the positive aspects of allopathic therapeutics, thoroughly believing that for certain diseases (like Malaria, Kala-azar, Syphilis, Amoebic Dysentery, skin diseases) allopathic therapeutics was the only dependable line.

In such a mental setup, I started my private practice as an allopathic general practitioner with specialisation in Obstetrics and Gynaecology. I carried a fair stock of Homœopathic medicines also simply for experiment purposes. I experimented with these medicines only in those cases where I was convinced as to the futility of Allopathic medicine, and conducted my experiment with my patients all along with a sceptic scientific mind, absolutely without any bias for or against any pathy. My success in the experiment with Homœopathic therapeutics at that time was really overwhelming. This might be due to the fact that the cases at that time were far more typical, conforming far more to the drug pictures in Materia Medica than today in the post-war period complicated by various factors, most important of which are (a) denaturalisation in every sphere of life, (b) advent of innumerable, highly potent suppressive drugs in the orthodox school of medicine. My approach towards Homœopathy at that time will be clear by an instance— which, by the way, was my first experiment and an exception—

ally typical one. I remember the case distinctly as if it happened only today. One morning a young man, a heavy chewer of betel—with a large amount of betel in his mouth—rushed into my chamber in great agony with great restlessness, exclaiming “Dr.! I am going to die of a severe pain in my right ear from which I have been suffering since early hours of this morning. Dr.! relieve me immediately or my death is inevitable.” While listening to him I thought within myself—“There cannot be a more typical case for Aconite than this. If Homœopathy is true, this case should be cured with Aconite and that within 5 minutes (Aconite being described as cyclone—like in its action)”. I asked the patient to throw away the betel in his mouth (but did not ask for the fuss of rinsing the mouth to avoid suspicion of Homœopathic medication) and forthwith administered a powder of Aconite 30 with my own hand and asked him to wait until the injections would be prepared by the compounder, keeping my eyes over my wrist watch all the while. Just after three minutes the patient asked in a shy tone, “Is the injection already prepared Sir? It seems it will not be required, as I feel almost free from the pain.” My joy knew no bounds—as no amount of morphia or any analgesic in the allopathic armamentarium could relieve the pain so quickly. Since then I got plenty of such experiences in various sorts of cases, getting more and more convinced about the facts presented in the *Materia Medica* and getting more and more enthusiastic about Homœopathy. In the meantime, by the advice of a well-read Homœopathic friend and colleague of Daulatpur (late Dr. P. N. Ghosh) I bought *Materia Medica* of Kent and Farrington, *Organon* 5th and 6th editions and various books on Homœopathic therapeutics (Diarrhoea, Cholera, Malaria, Intermittent Fever, etc.) and borrowed from another friend (Dr. K. N. Basu) Bradford’s *Life and Letters of Hahnemann*. At this time I devoted 10 to 12 hours daily for the study of Homœopathy. I felt actually annoyed if any professional call came during my hours of study. I read with special avidity Kent’s *Materia Medica* (giving 8 consecutive thorough readings at a stretch in the course of 1½ years) and Farrington’s *Clinical Materia Medica* (3 successive thorough

readings), of all these books on the other extreme was the Organon which brought very little meaning to me in the first one or two readings. Subsequently, the key to the intricacies of Organon appeared to me in the form of Kent's Philosophy which opened to me the rich contents of Homœopathy in its full essence and spirit. Before this my study and application of the science of Homœopathy was formal and mechanical, committing many serious blunders, the gravity of which was realised only in later life. Of plenty of such examples, I can not refrain from mentioning only one. At that time I vaunted much of a prescription of mine which cured (??) (really suppressed) any sort of eczema, however obstinate or old, in 2/3 or utmost 7 day's application. My first son at that time aged one year developed an eczema capitis. His symptoms indicated Sulphur and that remedy had been given in the 200th Potency, one dose. It was followed by intense aggravation. Instead of waiting I suppressed it forthwith with my pet local application. My Homœopathic friend (Dr. P. N. Ghosh) admonished this rash action of mine. I rebuffed him by saying "I am a man of science, I do not follow your dogmas." But I had later to pay severe penalties for this impudence. The boy soon developed Bacillary Dysentery which was brought under control with great difficulty. And this tendency persisted throughout his life, fulminating every 2/3 years, each time controlled with great efforts. But all attempts to bring back the eczema proved futile (so potent was my original Allopathic prescription!!!) and ultimately at the age of 12 years—a brilliant boy of class VIII—he had his last attack of Bacillary Dysentery—while I was detained as a security prisoner in Pakistan Jail. Nobody else knew about his peculiar constitution and specially about his idiosyncrasy about Allopathic medicine in general, and he succumbed immediately after an injection (the name of which is still unknown to me).

Then, about the last stroke of my metamorphosis in 1940. At that time I was three-fourth-fledged Homœopath, thoroughly convinced about the fair efficacy of Homœopathy in all diseases except Malaria and Kala-azar. With respect to only these two diseases I was not able to alienate myself from the attractions

of Allopathy in spite of having gone through "The Therapeutics of Fever" by H. C. Allen, and "Intermittent Fever" by P. P. Wells. Malaria was endemic in that locality and I myself was a veteran victim, often baffling the then famous anti-malarial pill invented by myself. I had to practise in the malaria season (one of the busiest seasons for practitioners in the locality) often with high fever, carrying my pet pill or Atabrin or Palludrin in my pocket. I thought of trying Homœopathy first on the Malaria of myself but my case was so obstinate and complicated that it baffled all attempts at the selection of any effective remedy. My first successful case of chronic Malaria was that of my sister-in-law (elder brother's wife) who presented a clear picture of Natrum Mur from beginning to end and one dose of Natrum Mur. 200 got her rid of Malaria for good. She is still living but never had another attack of Malaria. After that experience I was emboldened to treat many cases of chronic Malaria with Homœopathy with overwhelming success. Even the obstinate case of myself became much easier after repeated doses of my constitutional remedy—Sulphur—in various potencies at sufficiently long intervals. And lastly with respect to Kala-azar (which was not very endemic there) my allegiance with Allopathy was severed by successful treatment of a few cases. Now the last thread of hesitancy and uncertainty that still remained was with respect to Malignant Malaria. And fortunately for me, a sufficiently wide opportunity for settling up with this problem offered itself in the autumn of 1940. In that season an unusually severe epidemic of Malignant Malaria of wide variety and form swept over the area; every doctor there getting hundreds of cases. Peculiarity of the epidemic was that it baffled the most modern treatment of the time. Cases succumbed like rats during an epidemic of Plague even after 3-hourly injections of the most potent drug Atabrin, then already in the market. Shocked by the baffling experience I looked enquiringly into my Allen's Therapeutics of Fever and thought to myself, "if the contents of the book was cent per cent true, (which had already been proved to be so in all other cases of fever) there was no reason why Homœopathy should not be effective in Malignant Malaria."

cases too." At this fix of mind, one evening I was called on to a case of worst type—a child of 11 years, in a stage of collapse, where any injection would have been a veritable adventure being the last straw on the camel's back. So I took the party into confidence, explained the situation and told them I would like to try two doses of Homœopathic medicine (my use of Homœopathic medicine was by that time an open fact) for the night. If the patient survives the night, question of injections etc. may be decided in the morning. The party agreed. I administered Carbo Veg 200, one dose, forthwith from my pocket bag and left another dose to be given one hour later if the patient lives so long, or does not show palpable improvement. I did not expect any information next morning (as I was cock sure about the fate of the case) nor did I get any. But to my great surprise the father of the child appeared in my chamber (near the market place) at about 9 A.M. quite smiling, and narrated the developments after I left the patient. Soon after my first and only dose of Carbo Veg 200 the patient warmed up and became almost rejuvenated and demanded food. But as I had not left any advice regarding diet (which at that time appeared to me superfluous), they gave only some barley water with sugar candy. But the child cried the whole night for rice diet. So the man had to come to the market to buy some live-fish to be given to the boy with rice and came to me by the way to take permission (no question of any treatment). Of course, I gave the permission which appeared almost redundant. Since that very morning I spoke frankly to any party coming to call me for any case of Malignant Malaria and, for the matter of that, any case whatsoever that I shall use only Homœopathic medicine and nothing else—those who preferred it might take me in; otherwise they should seek treatment elsewhere. Those who had implicit faith in me and did not care what sort of medicine I used, called me. In this way I got opportunity of treating more than 200 cases in the remaining half of season with pure Homœopathy. And just after the epidemic was over in November, 1940, I squandered away my Allopathic dispensary, the stock value of which at that time (much cheaper market) would be little over about Rs. 1,000,

amongst my allopathic friends and turned into a full-fledged Homœopath. Since then till date I have not written a single prescription of allopathic medicine. Even in my operation cases (surgical, obstetrical or gynaecological), which I had in plenty while at Daulatpur or Khulna town (1943 to 1949) the only non-Homœopathic (really physiological rather than allopathic) drug that I had to use were chloroform and ether. I used no antiseptic other than alcohol and Calendula lotion. Of course, in the meantime, the more and more I penetrated into Homœopathy the indications for operation gradually became more and more limited.

Before finishing I may add that in the autumn of 1941 I had myself an attack of Malignant Malaria (Algid type), blood picture showing "M.T. rings in fair numbers" cured by 2 doses of *Ocimum Sanc.* 30 prescribed by myself in consultation with some of my Homœopathic friends—disobliging my allopathic friends who were furious at my "fanaticism" in refusing to take injections.

My experience with Homœopathy for the last 25 years is an ever increasing awareness of Homœopathy, an ever increasing realisation of the inadequacy and inaptness and shortcomings on my part. Even today whenever I open any book on Homœopathy, specially the classical ones, however many times already perused, I always learn something novel. Whenever taking a new case or even the very same case anew, I learn more and more a student rather than a master of Homœopathy.

—*The Torch of Homœopathy, July, 1963.*