

THE BEAUTY OF HOMOEOPATHIC MATERIA MEDICA*

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God's wisdom becomes manifest in everything that is diseased.

—Goethe.

"The drugs and other remedial substances used in medicine" or "the branch of medical science that deals with such substances, their uses, etc."¹ satisfies the lexical requirement of 'materia medica'. The drugs that are used extensively in different systems of medicine till this day are done empirically except homoeopathic drugs, although the sister sciences like pharmacognosy, pharmacoplexy etc. are developing tremendously with scientific precision!

The animal experimentation did help allopathic therapeutics and fixing the dose. Undoubtedly the homoeopathic materia medica, which is a collection of the total and complete effects of drugs on healthy human bodies, is a unique feature, nowhere observed in medicine except Homoeopathy. This is the colossal contribution by Hahnemann, the father of Homoeopathy. Homoeopathic philosophy and materia medica are the cornerstones of the edifice of Homoeopathy.

This has led to the dependable and scientific truths of therapeutics. The drugs that were used in yesteryears in Allopathy, became obsolete and every year millions of dollars are spent by the pharmaceutical houses in the world to explore new and wonderful therapeutic agents. Whereas, the homoeopathic drugs that were scientifically experimented nearly two hundred years ago are as efficacious now as they were before! Hence the homoeopathic materia medica is not kaleidoscopic. The wonderful aspect of homoeopathic remedy is the lack of iatrogenic effect. One need not purchase a side-effect of a remedy in Homoeopathy in order to achieve a successful therapeutic effect! The toxic and poisonous effects of allopathic medicines greatly helped Hahnemann in his time to complete the provings regarding the structural and tissue changes of the human body. Recently a renowned pharmacologist and researcher expressed difficulty to tackle cold in Allopathy successfully, because the only animal susceptible to cold was chimpanzee and to use that animal for the successful experimentation is exorbitantly expensive? Even by the time the virus for cold infection is isolated and antibiotic and anti-viral drug sensitivity is found out, the virus changes its pattern by genetic mutation and becomes immune to the already tested therapeutic agents! Such difficulties are not there in preparing the homoeopathic therapeutics and even to find out drugs for cancer!

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There is a wonderful scientific utterance by Hahnemann that diseases peculiar to the people of a place have curative properties in the plants of the same soil. The scientific curiosity of Hahnemann led to the successful collection of remedies from vegetable kingdom, animal kingdom, mineral kingdom and the kingdom of imponderables, and he experimented them on healthy people to construct *Materia Medica Pura*.

The drug-relationship in Homoeopathy is a beautiful science as exact as any but one that needs a good deal of art for the successful and curative use of the homoeopathic armamentarium. It is not complicated and frightful as has been expressed by the British gerontologist while emphasising the scrupulous care in prescribing medicines to the aged.²

The pinnacle of the scientific truth of homoeopathic materia medica is the discovery of the dynamic nature of the drug substance in the minimum dose, where the action of the drug and its properties are completely and thoroughly brought out and known to the human mind only when provings are carried on healthy human bodies with the dynamized homoeopathic medicines. This is the unique contribution by Hahnemann which elevated the therapeutic potentiality of the homoeopathic materia medica. The power of the homoeopathic medicine is intangible; in the phraseology of Robert Louis Stevenson: "I only saw the things you did, but always you yourself you hid." To convince the scientific mind on minimum dose, where the matter of the medicinal substance is nil, many researches were conducted by the American Institute of Homoeopathy but still the conclusive scientific proof is lacking. The physicists, who helped the projects tried to explain the curative properties of the homoeopathic higher dilutions to the action of the solvent and the solute.

Another very interesting feature of the action of a homoeopathic remedy when it is a simillimum is its *modus operandi*, which is still a phenomenon! Unless it is explained, allopathic brethren feel mystified at the action of a homoeopathic remedy. This is because the pathways and the actions of the allopathic remedies on human body are thoroughly and scientifically explained. It is difficult for them to swallow the phenomenal effect of the homoeopathic remedy on the human body!

The same dynamic nature prevails in understanding the 'disease' in Homoeopathy. This is another difficult proposition in Homoeopathy for our allopathic brethren to understand. In a recent experimentation with Baptisia, by this author, on healthy man, gave Widal's Reaction positive in the blood after its use for a couple of weeks. That did not mean Baptisia produces typhoid fever, but it produces a similar state like typhoid fever in the provings. This is because the aetiology of the disease in Homoeopathy is dynamic in nature and not materialistic implicating the bacteria, virus etc. This is how the science of the homoeopathic materia medica is far from the materialistic attitude!

The preventive medicine in Homoeopathy is very unique. It is high

time that governments should utilize the effective and dependable prophylactics in Homoeopathy. We need not wait for the isolation of a virus or bacteria to prepare a successful vaccine, for a ravaging epidemic.⁴ To arrive at the *genus epidemicus* for a given epidemic one has to observe carefully and collect the total anamnesis of the epidemic; in other words total symptom manifestation of the epidemic disease to select a curative homoeopathic remedy both for the treatment and prevention of the epidemic disease.

Last year the encephalitis epidemic in Andhra Pradesh was successfully prevented and treated by Homoeopathy. This author had the opportunity of working in several epidemics of smallpox, cholera, dengue, Madras eye (contagious ophthalmia) and influenza.⁵ Recently, this author worked out successful therapeutic homoeopathic remedy, *Eupatorium perf.* for dengue both as a prophylactic and a dependable drug for treatment.⁶

There is a beautiful and wonderful feature of homoeopathic materia medica which is not found in materia medica of other systems of medicine. Recently a case of gushing menses referred to by an allopathic colleague was treated successfully with *Lachesis*. In another case of amenorrhoea, referred to by the same doctor, *Lachesis* helped the patient in establishing normal menses. The inquisitive allopathic doctor searchingly questioned me, "How is it, the same medicine *Lachesis* helped in one patient to control bleeding and in another patient established physiological bleeding?" Thorough explanation on the unique properties of a polychrest remedy in Homoeopathy, which acts not only on many angles but also on *all* angles of different diseases in the patients satisfied the allopathic doctor and he was finally won over to Homoeopathy and is now practising Homoeopathy! That is why the homoeopathic therapy is oriented for the patient as a whole. In other words, it is said that homoeopathic physician treats the patient but not the disease.

When allopathic physicians are coming to study Homoeopathy unfortunately the homoeopathic graduates are using allopathic medicines wasting their long study of Homoeopathy! How to stop this tragic exodus? This author repeatedly emphasised the supreme need for thorough clinical management in the acute fulminating cases by Homoeopathy. The students require such facilities in the homoeopathic medical colleges. This author requests on this occasion the Adviser in Homoeopathy, Govt. of India, to institute lecture programme and demonstrations in the out-patient clinics and in the indoor clinics by the learned and experienced homoeopathic physicians. This type of practical teaching will solve the problem to a great extent.

Many of the learned colleagues in this august audience are well-acquainted with the different texts of homoeopathic materia medica, from Allen's *Keynotes* to Hering's *Guiding Symptoms*. Each text-book has great use for a general practitioner as well as for a pediatrician, cardiologist and gerontologist in Homoeopathy. It is not out of the way to say that homoeo-

pathic system of medicine is not only for acute and chronic diseases, but it is also a unique system of medicine to narrow down incurability in a patient. For the past two decades this author is seriously involved in narrowing down incurability in a patient.

To know successful prescribing in Homoeopathy one has to study well the different text-books on materia medica. Each book has its own good contribution for the use of the drugs. Different authors have highlighted different aspects of the drug-action. If one attempts to know completely the full scope of a homoeopathic drug, one has to study a remedy in all the texts of materia medica. To give you an instance, no author mentions the syphilitic diathesis, in Pulsatilla except Teste.⁷

While studying Kent's *Materia Medica* not only one gets thoroughly acquainted with the personality and the typology of the drug picture, but also gets a fund of knowledge on many valuable teachings of homoeopathic philosophy. The knowledge of the 'convertible conditions' like insanity and tubercular states are a clue to the successful use of Tuberculinum.⁸ If one desires to understand thoroughly the drug picture of Drosera, one has to read only the wonderful text-book of materia medica, *Homoeopathic Drug Pictures* by Tyler. Similarly to understand thoroughly Aconite, one has to read it in Dunham. If one likes to know thoroughly and completely the tale of Thuja, one has to read *Vaccinosis* by Burnette. His other pamphlets like *Gold As A Remedy*, *Natrum Mur.* are indispensable to specialise in homoeopathic materia medica. The lectures on materia medica by E.W. Hubbard and Blackie are indispensable for the critical study of materia medica. *Materia Medica Pura* by the father of Homoeopathy is the mother of all materia medicas! Boericke's is a concise text-book on the whole materia medica of that time. The therapeutic index in this book is priceless. The repertory in this book is also very useful. Some of its rubrics are not found in any other repertory; of course, its posology section is confusing to the classical homoeopaths. *Leaders in Homoeopathic Therapeutics* by Nash is a good text-book "To fasten upon the mind of the reader the strongest points in each remedy. Good offhand prescribing can be done in simple uncomplicated cases."⁹ *A Dictionary of Practical Materia Medica* by Clarke, is an elaboration of Boericke's with the inter-related utility of a repertory and a prescriber. Farrington very well highlighted the comparisons of 'group remedies' from animal, mineral and vegetable kingdoms. The therapeutic index and elaborate index for the remedies appended at the end of the text are supremely useful. Hering's *Condensed Materia Medica*, Cowperthwaite's works, Picree's *Plain Talks on Materia Medica*, *Physician's Posy* by Dorothy Shepherd and *Materia Medica* by Choudhury are a few more interesting books on materia medica for useful reading. Gladwin, disciple of Kent, published a monograph explaining in a portrait manner, group-drugs of materia medica, in human relationships. This type of presentation brings to mind drug relationship of similar remedies. Boericke and Tafel published a

couple of leading symptoms of polychrests on small and cosy cards. This was just to remember a few generals of the drugs. Hughes' persistent demands to revise materia medica led to the appointment of a committee by the British Homoeopathic Association and the American Institute of Homoeopathy. This committee completed its task in 1878 by the publication of *Cyclopedia of Drug Pathogenesis*. Without fourth volume, Repertory section, to read the elaborate material on homoeopathic materia medica is time consuming and tiresome. Similarly Knerr's *Repertory* helps to pick up points of doubt quickly from the relevant symptoms of the drugs, from the *Guiding Symptoms*. It is supposed to consist of only genuine symptoms of provings, freed from all irrelevant and untrustworthy matter.¹⁰ In this connection Hering's admirable advice "elimination of the useless may gradually take place with the growth of accurate physiological and pathological knowledge" is axiomatic!¹¹ To make a brief mention, these are some of the priceless valuable texts-books on materia medica. One has to study the provings in the Allen's *Encyclopedia* for thorough appraisal of homoeopathic materia medica. The index volume of Allen's *Encyclopedia* is equally useful and indispensable like the text.

Regional materia medicas like Bell's *Diarrhoea* and Intermittent Fever, *Skin Diseases*, *Eye Diseases*, *Headache*, *Constipation*, *Obstetrics* etc. by other authors are classics for the mastery of the materia medica. This valuable specialisation is knowing more and more about less and less to become an expert. For quick remembrance of homoeopathic materia medica, authors composed the symptomatology of drugs in verse which is a poetic beauty on homoeopathic drugs. 'Heart Rhymes'¹², 'Lachesis and Its Comparisons in Sexual Sphere'¹³ are papers by this author on the comparative study of materia medica. Gross and Farrington are classics on the comparative materia medica. Roberts published useful comparisons on the rheumatic remedies.¹⁴ William Gutmann published very useful information on his papers on homoeopathic remedies. Some of the valuable points on the law of signatures in the homoeopathic drugs are expertly explained. To find out contra-indication to the given remedy in a patient is another fascinating aspect of the specialised study of the homoeopathic materia medica. This author alone published contra-indications for a few polychrests.¹⁵ To complete the compilation of materia medica for contra-indications for the polychrest remedies in Homoeopathy, is a committed task of this author.

Interpretation of the symptoms like 'lung symptoms and intellectual symptoms interchange' and evaluation of the symptoms in a patient is an art in Homoeopathy, which can be achieved only by repeated study of the texts of materia medica. This author successfully prescribed Phosphorus in a patient of Zollinger-Ellison syndrome on the artistry of applied homoeopathic materia medica.¹⁶ On the advice of Kent, Lippe prescribed *Tarentula hispana* to his daughter on the symptom evaluation of restlessness from side to side.¹⁷ Lippe prescribed *Rhus tox.* and *Ars.* with no success! This is

what is called the art of applied materia medica. In the Kentian teachings this is what is called understanding the materia medica and not merely memorising it.¹⁸ A good meticulous study of materia medica by this author helped to contribute valuable new indication, 'motion amelioration' to the remedy Phosphorus.¹⁹ Right from the time of Hahnemann the study of materia medica has been under constant discussion. A. Pulford, H. A. Farrington, D. M. Farlan, E. W. MacAdam, J. M. Green and Gutmann published good articles in *The Homoeopathic Recorders*.

The value of materia medica and that of repertory are invaluable contributions to each other. To understand thoroughly either one has to read materia medica through repertory and repertory through materia medica.²⁰ Many symptoms of materia medica are not listed as rubrics in Kent's *Repertory* and not even in the *Synthetic Repertory* in the relevant chapters. That is why one has to master the technique of prescribing with the help of materia medica and also should know the technology of using repertory with success. In a recent case of mania in a patient of twenty, in this author's clinic there was a characteristic symptom 'scolding her mother' ceaselessly. Although many violent symptoms were controlled with Hyoscyamus, Tuberculinum etc., the symptom of 'scolding the mother' could not be controlled. Dr. P. S. Lakshmi, beloved wife of this author readily picked up the symptom in the Lachesis symptomatology from the *Guiding Symptoms*.²¹ After giving Lachesis the patient did not scold or even frown upon her mother! This symptom is not listed in the repertories, although similar symptoms like aversion to loved ones, etc are listed in repertory. This author is privileged to study Homoeopathy at the feet of Deekshitulu, Pierre Schmidt, E. W. Hubbard, and Blackie, who taught materia medica, repertory and the supreme value of their application in practice.

The Indian remedies already included in materia medica must be re-proved and clinically verified to determine their potentiality as polychrests. Apart from this, new remedies from Indian plants must be proved to help to tackle the diseases peculiar to the Indian soil. Homoeopathic therapeutics is supremely efficacious to humans, animals and plants.

Although a couple a pamphlets are available on veterinary therapeutics in Homoeopathy, homoeopathic system of medicine should be thoroughly experimented in the veterinary diseases by opening veterinary homoeopathic medical colleges and hospitals. Similarly in agriculture, homoeopathic therapeutics must be scientifically systematized. In this author's experience a beautiful rabid dog was saved from euthanasia by chaining it and treating it with Hydrophobinum IM in repeated doses. Similarly in the field of agricultural therapeutics, an emaciated sterile lemon trees was made healthy and fruit bearing by using Gaertner, a bowel nosode, by sealing the medicine in the trunk of the tree.

Bowel Nosodes and Flower Remedies are extremely valuable in this author's clinics. They must be thoroughly proved to enhance their supreme

therapeutic potentiality so that they can be included as polychrests in homoeopathic materia medica.

This author conducted provings for OAN, Cataractinum and IFCO. The students and the teachers in the homoeopathic medical colleges should participate in the provings of new remedies and also of the already proved remedies to enhance knowledge of materia medica. This has a double advantage. Provings on one's own self will provide a more authentic and unforgettable picture of the valuable indications of the remedies. By participating in the provings of homoeopathic drugs, the 'susceptibility' is cured in a harmless way and resistance to disease is wonderfully increased to combat existing 'infection' in the environment. Thereby the longevity is prolonged! Materia medica is the homoeopathic physiology²³ and comparative materia medica is the homoeopathic diagnosis.

I had the privilege of teaching homoeopathic materia medica in D. N. De Homoeopathie Medical College, Calcutta under D. N. Chatterjee and Madras Homoeopathic Medical College, Madras under N. M. Chowdhury. To write Shakespearian profiles in the homoeopathic materia medica is my fond hope after completing the committed works of compilation of lesser writings of Elizabeth Wright Hubbard, Boenninghausen's *Therapeutic Pocket Book* on partially proved remedies, repertory for the nosodes and applied organon. If any professor of English conversant in Homoeopathy is prepared to write Shakespearian profiles in homoeopathic materia medica, I shall be very happy to offer help, assistance and guidance.

I am more than grateful to the organisers of Dr. Netai Charan Chakravarty Memorial Committee for having this opportunity which was thrust upon me only last Saturday. Although the Committee permitted to choose my subject, it was not done because the subject announced for last year's oration was 'Beauty on Homoeopathic Materia Medica' by Dr. Kutumba Rao, which was not delivered! Hence this author prepared this oration without changing the subject except the preposition 'of' for 'on'! "The life-work of the student of the homoeopathic materia medica is one of constant comparison and differentiation".²³ The successful prescriber in Homoeopathy is one who treats scores of patients of diabetes, hypertension, epilepsy, and cancer. This author feels more than grateful, if the learned listeners of this august body are able to get a fringe of the beauty of the homoeopathic materia medica. I am still a student of Homoeopathy and like to learn as long as I live, in the phrasology of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna.²⁴

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