

THE HAHNEMANNIAN GLEANINGS

Vol. XXIX

APRIL 1962

No. 4

HAHNEMANN AS A MAN

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

There is hardly any personality in the history of development of modern sciences who is more neglected or ignored than Hahnemann. His multifarious genius made many epoch-making contributions in various branches of Science. But these facts are scarcely known or recognised outside the circle of his followers. Thus, his original contributions to the science of Chemistry (eg. "Wine test", "Colloidal suspension of Gold" etc.) are almost forgotten by chemical authorities. His basic and indispensable contributions towards the art and science of Pharmacy (*The Apothecaries' Lexicon*) were adopted and followed by the apothecaries, but the author was rewarded with ostracism and persecution throughout his life-time, and oblivion after his death. Few people in the field of the sciences of Hygiene, Public health, Town planning, Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, know or care to recognise that it was Hahnemann who first placed these branches on scientific bases (in the years 1782 to 1834) long before Pettenkofer, the accredited pioneer of modern Hygiene: he also formulated the germ theory of Cholera (1831) long before the so-called founders of Bacteriology—Koch and Pasteur. His contributions to Botany, Entomology, Sociology, Philology etc. also are not at all negligible. Then, in the field of Mental diseases Pinel is regarded as the pioneer of modern Psychiatry—which recognises insanity as a disease requiring scientific and humane treatment, instead of being held, as in Hahnemann's time, as "perversions of the moral tendencies of soul produced by sin", deserving inhuman torture.

But Hahnemann conceived the same idea and project (1791) one year before Pinel reformed the Bicetre Asylum in Paris; and more-over he laid the foundation of scientific medicinal treatment for mental illness—mental symptoms being given the most important attention in the proving of drugs. This aspect remained unknown not only to Pinel, but remains so in the Orthodox school till date. But, above all these, the greatest contribution of Hahnemann is that, in the long 3500 years' history of the art and science of Medicine since Aesculapius, it is he who first founded a scientific basis for Therapeutics.

It is a great paradox that scientists in general, and medical scientists in particular, not only failed to recognise his contributions, but even showed a reluctance or shyness to utilize the truths discovered and formulated by him, at great cost to themselves as well as to the whole mankind, although throughout the last one century, and especially during last few decades they are gradually and tardily shifting their position, and adopting the truths established by Hahnemann, impelled by their own experience, or by deriving their inspiration from the original source, although curiously enough without admitting it.

But, what are the causes of such an absurd situation? According to many, amongst whom are a good number of not only honest sympathisers but even sincere and able followers, the main cause lies in—(1) the personal character of the man—his unsociable sternness, gloominess, harshness, irritability of character, his intolerance of those who least differed from him; and (2) the bitterness of his writings—the torrents of condemnation heaped upon his opponents, especially upon the Orthodox medicine, and even upon those of his followers who deviated from his tenets.

Before deciding upon the value of this view as to the main cause of the cold attitude of the scientists' circles with respect to this great pioneer, let us try to make a brief epitomic analysis of Hahnemann as a man:

(1) Hahnemann was born in an age when the society was still dominated by traditional beliefs and dogmas rather than by reason and practical experience.

(2) He was born with unquenchable thirst for knowledge;

whereas the financial position of his family far from being congenial to this innate trend in him, had all along been a formidable shackle to his pursuit of knowledge, since very childhood. Even for prosecuting his elementary education he had to evade or fight strenuously the stern opposition of his father. This struggle instead of damping or slackening his zeal for knowledge, rather immensely enhanced and sharpened it, while at the same time steeling his juvenile heart.

(3) He had an innate craving for truth and abhorrence against falsehood or inconsistency, and both those qualities to an inordinate degree. While the first of these two traits goaded him to diverse fields of knowledge, and guided him to discover many truths in each field, often antedatedly *i.e.*, before they would be acceptable to ordinary literary or scientific circles, or corroborated by allied branches of science. This applies especially in the field of Medicine. The second trait—failure to make compromise with what he felt wrong or incongruous, or against the interest of mankind, made him incur innumerable worldly difficulties—financial, political and social. Each of these difficulties hardened his character all the more. He did not hesitate to forgo his fairly lucrative practice and suffer a sea of miseries along with his dearest family, as soon as he became convinced of the futility or rather harmfulness of medical practice of his day. He could have easily avoided many of these sufferings had he made slightest compromise with what he deemed untrue or antihuman. To us worldly people this may appear unnatural, unpractical or even grotesque. But if we remember that those limitless sufferings for himself as well as his dearest ones could not make him budge a hair's breadth from his convictions, we can understand why any allurements of cheap popularity failed to make him yield the least—to pressure from various circles—social, political and professional. This trait acquired for him a large number of formidable enemies in every field of his activity, while at the same time recruiting a few really honest friends and followers of solid calibre in different spheres of society, all over the Western world.

(4) But, after all, if we peep deeper into the inner soul of the man, we can easily find beneath the harsh, acrid shell, a

vast sea of love and sweetness. On analysing his life even cursorily, we can always find that his emotions were worst exasperated when he had to face any thing going against the real interest of mankind. And, in his time every sphere of life—social, political, medical and what not, was teeming with such problems, so as never to allow him a moment's mental peace. As a matter of fact, the fountain-head of most of his epoch-making discoveries, as well as his hardships and calumnies can easily be traced to his fathomless love for humanity.

The sweet aspect of the man also reveals itself in its fullest bloom when we find him in his family circle, or in the circle of his friends and followers. In the midst of his all exacting engagements in scientific, professional and literary works his concern for not only his own family, but for the family and personal life of his friends, followers and even patients was exemplary. His love for his wife amounted to devotion, although according to some of his close friends—like Ernst von Brunnow—she was a “scolding Xanthippe”.

Nevertheless, whatever may be our views or understanding about his personal character, I fail to agree with those who opines that the harshness of his behaviour, or bitterness of his writings is the main cause of alienation and hostility of the scientists in general especially of the orthodox school of Medicine, regarding him. Such a view, in my opinion, amounts to imputing pusillanimity to the scientists in general. I cannot believe that the scientists of the orthodox school of Medicine have been so long refraining from accepting the irrefutable truths, so valuable to themselves as well as the whole human society, because of the personal behaviour of their discoverer. In my opinion the main causes of the situation are as follows:—

- (1) Traditional beliefs and notions. These are not negligible forces, nor easy to supersede.
- (2) For the top and eminent people of the orthodox school, it is difficult not only to set aside their personal beliefs and habits, and to start anew from the very beginning, but also to run the risk of losing their position of eminence.
- (3) Most of the truths established by Hahnemann were too far ahead of his time, and are mostly remaining so till date.

Advancements of allied sciences are still failing to supply rational bases for these truths; but on experiments properly conducted they prove irrefutably true; e.g.—the almost negligible dose of high potency of the simillimum selected on the basis of totality of symptoms of the individual patient is found to remove a huge so-called irreversible tumour, or stone etc., or eradicate the most obstinate Malaria along with its teeming parasites, and so on. These facts cannot be rebutted. But upto date the sciences of Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Biophysics, Biochemistry, Physiopathology etc. fail to explain these facts with sufficient thoroughness. Consequently some dissatisfaction is bound to remain in the mind of the rational minded scientist, although solid facts are far far more valuable and dependable than abstract reason and speculation. But this healthy dissatisfaction should impel the scientists to further research rather than to shut their eyes and ears to blatant facts.

(4) The last but the most potent cause of the situation seems to lie in the arduousness of the application of the tenets of Hahnemann to practice. It is far easier to make a sham or cursory trial of them and then to denounce them as partially or wholly untrue and take recourse to alternative paths. Practical application of each of the steps of the tenets of Hahnemann requires time, patience, intelligence, critical observation and insight which cannot be expected from anybody who was any interest in mind other than the good of the patient, esp. in the present age of hurry and mercenary fetish.

In spite of the potency of all these causes, the hopeful feature of the present age is that the scientists in different branches of Nature esp. in the field of Medicine are gradually coming nearer to the views of Hahnemann, or accepting and adopting many of the truths antedatedly discovered by him, either from their own experience, or inspired by the original source—Hahnemannian literature. It appears that the day is not too far, when all the basic principles formulated by Hahnemann will be universally accepted and the apparent scientific inconsistencies will be matters of past, and science of Medicine will advance further and further to emancipate human society completely from the scourge of disease or ill health.

We need not get impatient nor loose heart for the situation prevailing in the past or today, far less retrace our path to oblige or seek favour of those who are lagging behind. Rather, we should keep the candle bequeathed to us by our great Master, burning as brightly as possible. A day is sure to come when this candle will illuminate the whole field of Medicine and help it to advance further.

I whole-heartedly endorse the view of the biographer Rosa Waugh Hobhouse—"yet however much even his followers may have been justified in regretting the torrents of condemnation which Hahnemann heaped upon orthodox medicine, it is conceivable that, had he gone to the other extreme and adopted a purely conciliatory tone, his following would have included men of a very different stamp. Consequently, his group, though larger in his day, would probably have dwindled after he was gone by virtue of its own indecision. As it was, the few who rallied round this teacher were students and doctors with sufficient penetration to see below the turbulent outpourings of indignation to the permanent nature of Hahnemann's contribution to medicine. They became keen fellow-workers and remained faithful over long years, and after his death carried forward his work"—(*Life of Hahnemann* by Rosa Waugh Hobhouse, p. 178). These "permanent contributions" have been relayed to us, Homœopaths of today, with brighter and brighter light, through wider and wider circle of worthy followers "with sufficient penetration". We have no right to tamper with these contributions to please any body, we have, of course, full rights to make it brighter with our own contributions and to carry it further forward.
