

HAHNEMANN: FORERUNNER OF IMMUNOLOGY

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Samuel Hahnemann was a prophet of medicine and the art of healing, born years ahead of his time in 1755. He brought about a single-handed revolution in the concept of cure. Considering himself as an agent of God, a mere medium, *nimittamatra*, carrying out the behest of God, Hahnemann placed before an unbelieving, unwilling, orthodox profession and a totally wondering public, the law of cure, *similia similibus curentur* with utmost humility and a profound conviction of its correctness, and with a deep awareness of the need to serve suffering humanity.

The law itself was not totally new then. Traces of it we find in medical philosophers as old as Hippocrates. The immediate catalyst who ignited the imagination of Hahnemann was the Britisher, Cullen, whose *inateria medica* Hahnemann was then translating and where he found references to the Peruvian bark. He inaugurated a new *saka* in the history of medicine when he published his paper on the law of cure in 1796 and christened it by the name of Homoeopathy. The life of Hahnemann after this epoch-making event was a heroic saga of relentless struggle against the attacks of the public and the profession, the government and the apothecaries. On our side, every time a dose of Aconite relieves a fever, or Arsenicum arrests a cold, we enact unconsciously the event of 1790 when Hahnemann first revealed to the world in a creative flash of divine intuition the therapeutic implications of 'like cures like'.

Let me now make brief reference to three eventful years in the life of Hahnemann. 1820—Encouraged by the jealous professors and other colleagues, the apothecaries complained against Hahnemann. The council of Leipzig ordered Hahnemann to stop all dispensing of medicine with his own hands. He was all but prevented from practising medicine in those days because of the vested interests of the druggist, the Mephistopheles of medicine even today. The minimum dose is always a threat to any commercial aspiration and Hahnemann's chief enemy was the apothecary in the beginning.

1821—The case of Hering is one in which a great doctor who came to heckle and scoff turned a great disciple. Hering was persuaded by the profession to write a book denouncing Hahnemann. Being sincere and honest, Hering wanted to investigate before launching his attack. The result: complete conversion to Homoeopathy. He became the founder of the Hahnemann College, chief preacher of the gospel and the daring prover of Lachesis.

1831 was another eventful year in which the epidemic of Cholera ravaged Europe when Hahnemann found in Camphor an appropriate remedy. Despite orthodox opposition, Hahnemann persisted in his relentless and dedicated application of the law of cure during this period. It was only in

England that statistics relating to the use of two types of medicine were kept and they are very revealing. Deaths due to orthodox treatment was 59.2% and deaths under homoeopathic treatment 16.4%. A very gratifying piece of historical evidence for any homoeopath. No wonder the British Dr. McLoughlin was reported to have said: "If it should please the Lord to visit me with cholera, I would wish to fall into the hands of a homoeopathic physician".

Also at this time Hahnemann was talking with prophetic insight when he referred to the importance of compulsory notification and isolation of infected persons, the value of abundant fresh air and the dangers of conveying disease by excreta and clothes.

In 1835 Hahnemann married a French woman having lost his first wife five years earlier. The first wife, we gather, was a sort of domestic despot and Hahnemann used to playfully refer to his wife's sense of discipline. But she was a cultured lady who could enter into the spirit of her husband's work. Of a different kind is the bond that united Hahnemann and his second wife. The French woman loved Homoeopathy passionately and she wanted to learn. She came to learn but ended up becoming his wife. It was she who took him to Paris and introduced him to the high and the mighty. Hahnemann brought immense relief to many suffering Parisians. He was working ceaselessly up to the very end. And when the end did come, he welcomed it as a joyous passing to the Father of moral purity and virtue. In keeping with the deep humility which characterised his life, Hahnemann seems to have expressed a wish that a very brief inscription be put on his grave. The words are: *Non Inutilis Vixi* meaning I have not lived in vain. Dr. Samuel Hahnemann did not live in vain. And this humble homage today is a testimony to the fact that his spirit is still alive informing us with zeal and enthusiasm, clarity and conviction, care and compassion in order that we may pursue the eternal law of ideal cure.

Hahnemann did not live in vain. Each new discovery or break-through in medicine seems to confirm the basic postulates found in the *Organon*. Perhaps it would not be far-fetched to suggest that certain recent advances in the field of immunology are merely an elaborate footnote to what Hahnemann originally revealed to the world.

Even now the medical men, the best of them, I mean, know that they know very little and they say that there is so much more to know, so many dark areas, enigmas, and puzzles. The greatest enigma is 'disease' itself. What is disease and what is normalcy are still debatable questions. And it is here that Hahnemann's intuitions and revelations give strength to us and help us appreciate and admire the marvellous feats of medical research in the field of immunology and immunotherapy.

Hahnemann based his diagnosis on semeiology, the science of signs, symptoms. In other words, what we call symptomatology. You first have the symptomatology of the patient, the picture of the patient. You have the picture of the drug. Then you match the two. In this matching you take the entire per-

son as a psychosomatic entity. In this matching, you practise the art of healing by interpreting the symptoms. Induction first—from the particular to the general and then only deduction—from the general to the particular. The more you know the better, of course. One would like to know more and more, not about less and less, but more and more about most of the person. A complete picture of the person which must become an integral picture for the doctor. It is a sort of medical hermeneutics—body as book, doctor as interpreter.

The physician is seen as one who helps to restore 'order', equilibrium in the body. We say the vital force is activated. It is made to assert itself. Hence the usual techniques of (a) physiological alteration (use of drugs according to the law of contraries—anti-biotics etc.), (b) chemical antidoting (use of alkalis for acid stomach etc.), (c) palliative therapy (use of anodynes, analgesics etc.) are avoided. Further the homoeopaths uphold the law of Arndt-Schultz: small doses stimulate, medium doses paralyse and large doses kill. Hence the belief in the magic of the minimum dose.

The concept of the vital force agrees with the present day notions of the body's mysterious natural defence system. The new immunology relates to "the biology of self-recognition, the molecular basis of specificity and the process of information transfer in biological systems".

The body is supposed to maintain its integrity by an innate capacity for self-recognition and anti-self identification. In medical terms, we are referring to the complex phenomenon of 'antigen and antibody'. "The distinguishing characteristic of an antigen is its foreignness, its property of being non-self. An antibody is a protein circulating in the blood stream, whose structure is exactly complementary to that of the antigen". It is my belief that in some mysterious way the magic of the minimum dose is related to the body's immune system. The vibrational properties of the minimum dose rouse and activate the vital force thereby helping and restoring the system to a dynamic equilibrium without inhibiting the immune response of the body.

The body possesses a built-in radar system. When a microbe/virus/antigen is spotted, the body's immune system swings into action immediately. In some people the system is adequate to rout the enemy anti-self antigen. In some the response results in an over-reaction as though the immune system is not able to interpret or decode the signals from the anti-self. When the system fails to interpret, it fails to form the antibody. As Medawar beautifully puts it: "a virus is simply a piece of bad news wrapped up in protein".

In actual fact, the body has a dual purpose immune system. One unit produces the 'T' cells depending on the thymus gland—body's first line defence. Another the 'B' cells which are capable of fighting the small enemy. The 'T' cells go in for the big ones like cancerous growths, tumours and skin grafts.

Everywhere the talk turns on immunity nowadays. Look at the recent encephalitis wave. Viral fever—virus of unknown origin you can only pray

or use the usual palliatives or suppressives. The entire thing looks like a spine-chilling science fiction event. You do not know what you are fighting and yet you fight. Would it not be better to go by symptomatology here? Maybe the minimum dose would decode the viral signal and activate the immune response of the body. At least you could say you are not fighting in the dark. Virus may be the same but the body's ability to recognise the virus is not the same in every person. Hence the need for individualization. Hahnemann mentioned that an attendant who attends to a smallpox patient gets a lifetime immunity from smallpox. He also distributed preventive medicines in Homoeopathy in a village for Asiatic cholera and not even one single patient was reported with an attack when an epidemic was ravaging in the nearby villages in Germany.

"It was true that at the start antibiotic treatment was simpler, before the cocci developed resistant strains but nowadays the orthodox physician needs to be precise in the selection of his antibiotic. Is the coccus resistant to tetracycline, erythromycin, chloramphenicol, streptomycin, novobiocin or the eight or nine derivatives or variation of penicillin". (1971/157). The use of cortisone in these battles exerts an inhibitory effect on at least three stages of antibody formation: (1) assimilation of the antigen to the tissues, (2) the inflammatory reaction, (3) the synthesis of the defensive antibody globulin.

"Cortisone will sabotage the efforts of the tissues to deal with the offending antigen; and in actual practice, homoeopathic physicians have found there is little if any response to well-chosen homoeopathic remedies if the patient is also taking cortisones or one of its derivatives.

One final point: In research on pain again, we are getting very revealing information about the self-sustaining powers of the human body. There is for instance the idea or better the medical construct that there is a pain gate or 'spinal gate' which opens or closes as the case may be when the pain signals reach the spot on the way to the brain. What ought to interest all of us here is this: that the gate, we are told, closes when you experience positive emotions and that negative emotions open it. Also there is this other idea that the brain produces its own morphine and that there is an undiscovered chemical in the brain which is somewhat analogous to morphine. It is called 'enkephalin' by one expert. We are not saying anything new when we say that positive emotions are life enhancing. They add 'life to years, not just years to life'. In opting for life enhancing positive emotions, we opt for self-reliance and self-repair. Even when the problems are minor, a positive self-reliant approach makes for a healthy and confident living.

Once again let us remember the name of Hahnemann and what he stood for in his life while committing ourselves to the ideal of Homoeopathy and self-reliance.
