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EDITORIAL

HOMOEOPATHIC PHARMACOPOEIA LABORATORY VIS-A-VIS RESEARCH IN HOMOEOPATHY—A PERSPECTIVE

Two research papers have been published in this issue of THE HAHNEMANNIAN GLEANINGS. They were released for publication by a team of workers engaged in research work at the Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia Laboratory, Ghaziabad. If they could be regarded as an index of the type of research work that is being carried out and labelled as Homoeopathic Research it raises many important issues.

First of all, what was the object set for this type of research that is published? Apparently, it conveys an impression that the teams were engaged in the pharmacognostic study of the source material of two of the drugs from the homoeopathic materia medica. Are homoeopathic drugs suseeptible to such type of research? Perhaps, this question is answered both in the affirmative and negative.

India has so far been relying on the United States Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia for the standards of homoeopathic drugs. In fact, the standards were never questioned since there was no question of manufacturing homoeopathic drugs in our country and they were wholesale imported from abroad. In a situation at present when India is making headway in establishing Homoeopathy firmly in its soil and is receiving the backing from the government to systematise it at all levels, a move is on for bringing out an Indian Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia which will not only lay down the standards for homoeopathic drugs that are already figuring in the different homoeopathic pharmacopoeia in vogue, but also incorporate in it, by evolving suitable standards, some of the Indian drugs, which the homoeopaths in this country are using with advantage mostly, in the tincture form. It is difficult to say what is in the mind of the government and whether the establishment of the Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia Laboratory is a precursor to the indigenous manufacture of homoeopathic drugs on a large scale in future. Whatever be its intention the ultimate decision will rest on the results of the work done at the above institution, when questions will be put whether the output in terms of the work carried

out meets with the objectives set for establishing it? That puts the persons engaged there in a highly responsible position since they become answerable to both the government as well as the profession.

Conceding the point that the research published in the two papers cited above was intended to standardise the source material of the two homoeopathic drugs, it raises the question whether the teams had followed the procedure for selecting the standards mentioned in pharmacognosy? For instance, the authors are blissfully vague about the choice of the standard material in the experiment on Asafoetida with which they have compared the results of their experiment of the seven random samples they procured from commercial sources. It is needless to point out to the learned authors of the above research papers how an error in choosing a right standard magnifies the errors in respect of the inferences drawn on it by a thousandfolds. Take for instance a paper published as research work in the *British Homoeopathic Journal*, October 1977 issue on the efficacy of Arnica montana in the treatment of apoplexy. Here the researchers sacrificed the law of similars, which is the only standard for selecting and administering homoeopathic remedies, and instead, selected a standard for administering Arnica montana based on the classical symptoms of apoplexy described in the textbook of medicine. At the end of observing the effects of the drug administered thus, they came to the fallacious conclusion that Arnica montana is not efficacious in the treatment of apoplexy!

Another point about research is the need to acquaint oneself with the latest literature available in the field on the subject. A team of referees to whom the papers were sent for opinion have unanimously opined that a great deal of work had been done on Asafoetida after 1953 and papers had been published in pharmacological journals from time to time. These papers could have been gone through with advantage by the researchers before embarking on a plan of research of that substance. A research carried out of any drug substance, particularly if it pertains to the pharmacognostic study of it, through whatever media it is published, raises many an eyebrow of workers and academicians engaged in similar fields. By the publication of the above papers the writers have extended the field of observation beyond the levels of the government and the profession to the whole world of pharmacology. The authors of research have a legitimate right to set a larger field of observation for the work they are engaged in, provided, they ensure that they have followed the scientific procedures laid down by each field for observing and announcing their findings in it and, that what they have observed or found was not the observation or findings already made by others. Unless a piece of research fulfils these criteria it fails to merit the title given to it.

A third point relates to the methods and techniques of observation and reporting the results of research. As for instance, the referees who went through the paper on "Gas Liquid Chromatography of Fatty Acids of Leaves of Abroma augusta Linn." were at a loss to know how the fatty acids could

be recognised without converting them into esters, of which the authors have chosen to remain silent in their writings? It was not so much that they doubted the techniques employed by them as much as they objected to the language of reporting their findings. For, nobody suspects the knowledge of the learned scientists who have successfully carried out a research of that magnitude. It at once highlights how a fracture can occur between the thoughts and expression and the necessity for a scientist to be adept in language so that, he can establish a meaningful communication with his environment.

With regard the other part, which is the more important of the two, the knowledge of drugs that helps a homoeopath in therapeutics, is their capacity to express through signs and symptoms when administered to healthy individuals, what are termed drug provings, and those that are observed and recorded when they are accidentally taken by the individuals—their toxicological expressions. Of what use is it to him to have knowledge of the number of fatty acids in the leaves of Abroma augusta or for that matter, which one of the eight is responsible for producing what group of pathogenetic symptoms? Of value to Homoeopathy is the study of the dynamic action of drugs, not so much their pharmacological action because, what aids him to make the totality are the symptoms which are uncommon, peculiar and characteristic and expressed through the provings rather than those observed in their toxicological studies. The latter studies are confined to the acquisition of knowledge of what is common to all rather than to bring out what is uncommon in them. Hence, it is important for the scientists engaged in homoeopathic research to draw a line, limiting the scope of pharmacognostic study to a reasonable level of standardization of the source materials from which homoeopathic drugs are prepared, and before embarking on an ambitious plan of research, examine the knowledge already available in the field with advantage, if it is not intended by them to convert the Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia Laboratory into a pharmacological laboratory of general interest. The funds, materials, manpower and the technical know-how made available to them needs to be utilised for the specific purpose in a manner that it maintains its identity perpetually and serves the homoeopathic profession in its endeavour to systematize knowledge along the scientific lines.
