

PROBLEMS HOMOEOPATHY MUST FACE

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The future Mecca of Homoeopathy is without doubt going to be this country. This development, however, poses several responsibilities for India for which it must take certain steps right away. While interest in Homoeopathy is increasing day by day, homoeopaths are on the verge of losing forever several valuable homoeopathic drugs because of the unique and adverse economics under which the homoeopathic drug industry has to operate.

The World Directory of Homoeopathic Physicians lists about 35 countries with homoeopathic practitioners. The number of practitioners working in a country generally ranges from a low of two to a few thousands except India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The number of homoeopathic practitioners in these three countries is almost 4 lakhs to 5 lakhs. And amongst these three countries, again, the case of India is unique as it not only has the largest number of homoeopaths but also because it is the only country which has officially recognised Homoeopathy as a system of medicine legally on par with all other systems of medicine including Allopathy.

India is the only country in the world that has a Central Council of Homoeopathy constituted under an Act of Parliament. There is a Government Research Council for Homoeopathy, a National Institute for post-graduate education and advanced treatment, and over a hundred government recognised and government run homoeopathic medical colleges and hospitals. Nowhere in the world does the homoeopathic system enjoy such privileges and opportunity as in India!

The reasons for the popularity of Homoeopathy in India are perhaps first, that the basic principles of this system are more in accord with the traditional philosophical outlook of our people, and secondly, that utter cheapness of these medicines make them quite attractive.

There is a large demand in India for homoeopathic medicines, homoeopathic literature and facilities for training of homoeopathic physicians. India must, therefore, acquire a special position also in the manufacture and supply of homoeopathic medicines.

As homoeopathic medicines act only as stimuli to the nervous system, their quantity required is almost negligible. Theoretically, a single dose of a high potency which would be the size of a rye grain can act curatively for months and would hardly cost a quarter of a rupee. The potency of the medicine increases by progressive dilution of the drug so that a very little quantity of the drug is required for preparing large quantities of homoeopathic medicines.

This fact has a very significant bearing on the commercial aspect of the

homoeopathic pharmaceutical industry. In the pioneering period of Homoeopathy, which was mostly confined to Europe and later to the USA, the sources of homoeopathic medicine were largely the same as of Allopathy. These drugs were tested on healthy human beings in a mild and sometimes infinitesimally small doses, and the symptoms, subjective and objective, produced on those experimented were carefully recorded. In addition to the animal and mineral-based drugs which generally present no difficulties for future supplies, a large number of plant-based drugs have also come to be used and today they form a very precious and valuable repertoire in homoeopathic practice.

As long as the plants used were practically the same as for the allopathic system, their collection and processing for pharmaceutical purposes did not present much difficulty. The same supplies used by the different systems were a commercially sound proposition as regards the quantity. However, as more and diverse experiments were made for homoeopathic purpose, the crude drugs used in Homoeopathy no longer remained the same as required by the allopathic practitioners.

As the allopathic pharmaceutical industry also has branched out to totally new fields, such as antibiotics and synthetic material, it no longer depends on old vegetable sources. This has put homoeopaths in great trouble. As the quantity of drugs required for homoeopathic purposes alone is commercially not adequate, their collection and availability is becoming more and more difficult.

Moreover, as the experimental data collected till now is exclusively bound to the particular plants used originally, the future supplies have to continue to be of those particular species grown in that particular soil and climate. For instance, if in the original experiment a particular plant collected from a particular place in Germany was used, it would not serve the purpose if a similar plant is grown elsewhere, as even a slight variation from the original will render it useless.

It so happens that most of the experiments on drugs derived from the vegetable kingdom were made in Germany and USA. Hence even now the bulk of our homoeopathic medicines have to be imported from these two countries. Sometimes the crude plants are imported in dry forms and medicines are made from them. Even these medicines, some homoeopaths feel are inferior to those made from fresh plants. (1)

Some of the plants have become ten times more costly in just ten years simply because the demand for such plants in foreign countries is not sufficiently paying and their collection costs disproportionately more than a few years ago. For compelling commercial reasons many homoeopathic manufacturers have already started allopathic departments or started marketing homoeopathic specifics like Alfalfa Tonic, Arnica Hair Oil and combinations of biochemic salts which are generally not in accord with pure homoeopathic principles.

There is a serious possibility of several manufacturing concerns in Germany and USA folding up their homoeopathic business altogether.

This eventually should be a matter of grave concern for homoeopaths in India. Not only has the cost of homoeopathic medicines gone up but there is also the prospect of non-availability of some of the medicines in future. For instance, the cost of *Hydrastis* and *Berberis vulg.* has become exorbitant because the foreign suppliers have to pay heavily for their collection in quantities not commercially profitable. *Hecla lava* which was a piece of rock from Mt Hecla in Iceland, and was experimented for homoeopathic purposes, is reported to be out of stock because the original supplies, which might have been a few pounds and which was sufficient for many years has now been exhausted and it is no longer profitable to identify and to procure the same again.

These are some of the problems which we have to face squarely and in good time. Fortunately, the Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia Committee of India is seized with this matter. But, because the problem is not so acute immediately, it is not being tackled on any priority basis. The Government of India has already started a Homoeopathic Drug Testing Laboratory which will on the one hand lay down standards for the manufacture of homoeopathic medicines and on the other hand find out by modern analysis and other techniques whether some of the drugs now imported from abroad can be substituted by indigenous sources.

The wealth of vegetable medicinal substances in India is not disputed. However, these substances have not yet been experimented with for homoeopathic purposes. An experiment of a drug for homoeopathic therapeutic use is quite a detailed and elaborate process. It does not depend on a laboratory so much as on accurate, conscientious, and careful observation of objective and subjective symptoms of a number of healthy persons under a controlled experiment. A beginning has no doubt been made by our research units to experiment with some of the indigenous plants.

But the pace at which it is being done is so slow that it may take 50 years to produce not even one-tenth of the medicines in the homoeopathic materia medica available today. It is, therefore, imperative that we should take some urgent steps to avoid a situation where there will be thousands of trained homoeopathic physicians, and there will be scarcity of authentic homoeopathic medicines.

We could try to grow the foreign plants from saplings and seeds under conditions of soil and climate approximately similar to their original habitat, and confirm the therapeutic values of the plants so grown by clinical trials. (2)

We could also step up our experiments to find out reliable substitutes for the foreign plants with similar species available here.

Editorial comments : (1) As per the original directives, some of these

vegetables are to be prepared from some part of the *fresh plant* in a particular season, or a particular phase of the life of the plant, to wit, flowering phase, in order to get their fullest effects. This factor adds further weight to the problem.

(2) Fortunately for us, our motherland is a multifaunal and multifloral country. It has in its territory all diversities of region with their respective geographical, geological and climatic peculiarities which have closest similarity with various regions of the world, where the same species are naturally born.

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MAHATMA GANDHI AND THE QUOTATION ON HOMOEOPATHY

(Continued from page 188)

if anybody knows the truth of the Gandhian quotation on Homoeopathy.

The same quotation was published on the invitations of the first Homoeopathic Conference in Andhra in 1932. Under the title of "They Say" the same quotation was published in the Homoeopathic Sandesh of which Dr. Yudhvir Singh was editor. He too says in his recent letter that Gandhi never said it!

I had an occasion to visit Shri Vinobha Bhave at Pawanar Ashram along with his devoted disciple, Dr. Vempati Suryanarayana, the famous Ophthalmic Surgeon and great worker of Sarvodaya movement in Andhra Pradesh. During my written conversation with Shri Vinobha Bhave as he is stone deaf, he told me that homoeopathic system of medicine is harmless and sweet like *Samya Yoga*. Then by the time I finished my written conversation with him, my allotted time was over. I intend to meet him again during my visit to Nagpur for the Fifth Homoeopathic Scientific Seminar and wish to get some glimpses of green memories on the issue of Gandhian quotation on Homoeopathy, since he expressed very kind sentiments on Homoeopathy.

I request the readers of this esteemed old journal in Homoeopathy to write to the author, if they happen to know the truth of the quotation.
