

THE REAL MEANING OF TOTALITY OF SYMPTOMS*

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Homoeopathy has been regarded as a science of symptomatology. The deviations from normality of health are narrated by a patient and/or his attendants. These are further observed carefully by his doctor. According to Dr. Carroll Dunham, "symptoms are everything that distinguish a sick man from his state of health." Note the words "his state of health", signifying that the "state of health" may be different with different individuals.

Having defined 'symptoms', we come to totality of symptoms. Every remedy has been proved by provers and verified clinically. All such provings in the form of symptoms have been recorded in materia medica or encyclopaedias. 'Sulphur patient' (i.e. a patient for whom Sulphur is the homoeopathic similimum) would narrate or even have twenty-five per cent of the recorded symptoms. The probability of any patient carrying all the recorded symptoms, however few, of any remedy, is very very small if not totally zero. This only means that the words totality of symptoms which form the basis of selection of the most appropriate remedy, do not refer to those enlisted under any remedy.

Dr. Hahnemann himself used the words 'totality of symptoms'. At that time, the classical school of healing was dominant. Patients were classified disease-wise. Every disease had a group of general symptoms, distinguishing one disease from the other. For example, in typhoid, a progressive febrile illness marks the onset of the disease, involving small intestines and, in some cases, tending to profuse diarrhoea stools which may become haemorrhagic; recovery generally starts by the third week; a rose-coloured rash may appear on the upper abdomen and back at the end of the first week; day-to-day temperature chart if prepared may give a picture of rising waves followed by a symmetrical decline. Typhus is an acute infectious disease with characteristics of high fever, a skin eruption and severe headaches; it is a disease of war, famine or catastrophe being spread by lice, ticks or fleas. Once it has been diagnosed that a patient is suffering from a particular disease, the doctor has nothing more to ask. All patients, so classified would be treated alike. This even now, is in practice. Among a group of typhoid-class-patients, to see that the face of a patient is dark red or red, burning and swollen; or flushed and bloated with red sparkling eyes and dilated pupils; or pale shrunken and hippocratic etc. is not their job. Similarly, the tongues may be coated brown, dry particularly in the centre; or coated with a thick white

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or yellowish fur, later brown and dry; or tongue dry red and cracked or red on edges and white in centre; or red at tip in a shape of a triangle; or dry shriveled, bluish or black with inability to protrude it etc. all these variations are meaningless to the doctor belonging to classical school, provided the disease label 'typhoid' (or for that purpose, any other name) has been pronounced. But Hahnemann considered, that every other form of information, called symptoms, varying from patient to patient falling in the same disease—category, must be given adequate weightage to cure the patient. The classical medical experts try to cure the disease, whereas Hahnemann thought of curing the patient as a whole. The patient's symptoms comprise symptoms exclusive to the disease plus (and this is an important plus) other specific symptoms which would vary from patient to patient, no matter even if suffering from the same disease-category. Thus, for an integrated picture: symptoms of disease + other symptoms of the patient = universality of symptoms.

As the symptoms other than those of the disease were (and even now 'are') more weighty than only those of the disease itself, an emphasis on the added symptoms was initially very meaningful.

Practice had to make this reality of 'universality of symptoms' more objective and practical. Symptoms of any patient are likely to be numerous. Unless each symptom is properly assessed, evaluated and given due weightage that it deserves, one is likely to be lost in a jungle. Dr. Hahnemann again showed us the way: "We have seen that one part serves for diagnosis of the illness, a large portion has no usefulness, because of that common to all patients, for example the thirst after the course of a high fever. In a word only some symptoms are striking, odd, peculiar, evoking a measure of original, personal reaction. It is these symptoms, and only these, that we will use and keep in the totality of symptoms, that is to say the minimum of symptoms with the maximum value, characterising the personal fashion in which the patient makes the illness, and not the numerical sum of all symptoms imaginable, which is the universality of symptoms". Special notice must be taken of the word 'universality' as distinguished from 'totality'. Quoting again the master, "The totality of symptoms include the most powerful, the most original, the most unusual and the most personal."

—Dr. Pierre Schmidt has given 40 varieties of symptoms. These may be exhaustive and may cover the universality of symptoms. Further efforts have been made to derive and underline or sieve the 'universality' into 'totality'. All this is needed for one purpose: "This is that totality of symptoms which the cure must destroy in order to restore the health of the patient" in words of Dr. Hahnemann himself. The following categories have been practically found useful in tracing the totality of symptoms and on the basis of which a good prescription can be based:

(1) Change of personality and temperament, including desires/cravings/aversions: Such symptoms in repertories or materia medicas are given the

first position. First mind and then the physical body, this is the order of affliction, according to homoeopathic principles. Symptoms under this category also include dreams, sex impulses and even suicidal tendencies, if any. If the patient and the doctor are connected by a bridge of confidence, the above type of symptoms would extremely narrow down the choice of the remedy. Sensations, which the patient begins with the words 'as if' have a depth of their own.

These are *most powerful* and *most personal* symptoms.

(2) Peculiar, striking and extra-ordinary symptoms: As the name suggests, the existence of one such symptom might be likened to a light-house in the ocean of symptoms. Such a symptom is a pointer to a single remedy or a narrow range of remedies.

These come under the category of *the most unusual* symptoms.

(3) Modalities: How and when is the disease ameliorated or aggravated? Is there any periodicity in the attack? Such symptoms speak about the constitutional remedy sometimes. If all the symptoms of the patient tally with those under a remedy except the modalities-symptoms, it is very unlikely that the patient will be cured thereby, no matter a little relief is visible.

Sometimes, desires/cravings/ aversions are adjusted in accordance with suitability (amelioration) of the time, weather conditions, temperature of the food/drinks. It would be regarded as a strange and peculiar symptom if a patient craves for a thing which harms him (Arg. nit. patient craves for sugar but suffers if taken).

Such symptoms may be regarded as *most original*.

(4) Cause: Though not directly a symptom, it opens a window on the selection of the remedy. A mare's kick many years back unmanifesting any effect for a long span may be the cause of pain or dysentery later on. A patient may not correlate the kick and the trouble, particularly separated by forgetful years, but for a doctor, this is a pointer to the choice of correct and curative selection.

Causes would neither be wanting, nor few in number, when a patient says, "Doctor, I have never been well after measles, or delivery or vaccination, or an accident or a fright etc." Such single narration might outweigh many other symptoms.

Important among the causes is the miasmatic base and/or the susceptibility of a patient to corresponding types of diseases.

Cause is, therefore, most powerful as well as *most personal*.

(5) Seat and/or the nature of the trouble: This location is of interest in every system of medicine, but in Homoeopathy, it has added importance. A patient suffering from pain in his abdomen naturally points to his abdomen but it is ingenuity of a homoeopathic physician to dig out the correct medicine among the forty-four pages of various descriptions in Kent's *Repertory* (pp. 554-598). Certain medicines have a proven affinity for a certain specified

organ. The symptoms of seat have further split differentiation also, qualified by the exact nature of the trouble.

Such symptoms are among *The most personal*.

In understanding the real meaning of totality of symptoms, another basic aspect of Homoeopathy is also attracted. In other systems of medicines, many prescriptions are a mixture of a number of medicines or drugs, each drug covering a part of the ailment. But, in Homoeopathy, as Dr. Hahnemann has rightly stressed, a single remedy must be found for the totality of symptoms. There is no room for partial curbs; the aim is the complete cure of the patient.

Many patients now visiting homoeopathic doctors are those who have been heavily drugged by allopathic mixtures, injections, vaccinations etc. Their resulting reactions alter the personality, the modalities, the peculiar and unusual symptoms considerably. In such cases, the totality of symptoms prior to the use of drugs, injections or vaccinations must be considered. The super-imposed drug symptoms do not form any part of the totality of symptoms.

The real meaning of totality of symptoms, therefore, boils down to a minimum number drawn out of universality of symptoms that can allow the choice of a single remedy for the complete cure of the patient. It may be, though not essentially, that no symptom of the disease may find a place in the totality of symptoms.
