

## **EDITORIAL FOR November 2018**

### **DOCTRINE OF SIGNATURE v/s STRICT INDUCTIVE METHOD OF DR SAMUEL HAHNEMANN.**

*"What is to become of an art (to which the charge of human life has been committed) if fancy and caprice are to have the upper hand in it?"*

– Samuel Hahnemann

*"If our School ever gives up the strict inductive method of Hahnemann we are lost and deserve to be mentioned only as a caricature in the history of medicine."*

– Constantine Hering

*"We have nothing to do with the man [misrepresenting homeopathy], we have to correct errors taught and disseminated, and we shall expose these errors which must lead our school astray, without fear or favor."*

–Adolph Lippe

There is an old saying in medicine, *Experimentia ac ratio*, meaning that the practice of medicine is sound as long as it is based on pure observation and correct reasoning.

Since last many years speculative homoeopathy is going around where theories are woven around animal kingdom, plant kingdom, mineral kingdom or prescribing medicine based on periodic table etc. this really challenges the values of pure observation and correct reasoning which are at the very heart of pure homeopathy as developed by Samuel Hahnemann.

## **The doctrine of signatures**

In Hahnemann's time, as well as for time immemorial, the doctrine of signatures meant looking for therapeutic meaning in all "sensible external signs," "sensible properties," "external properties," "appreciable by the senses" or through "any characteristic feature of a substance."

Hahnemann made his point very clearly regarding the use of any signatures. He said, *"With all our senses together, employed with the utmost care, in the examination of a medicinal substance with regard to its external properties, do not give any, not even the slightest information respecting this most important of all secrets, the immaterial power possessed by natural substances to alter health of human beings."*

Hahnemann never argued against the value of "the superficial concept of external signs." To the contrary, he emphasized that all that is perceptible by all the senses simply means everything that is perceptible.

**Hahnemann uses the same expression regarding examination of the patient. In *Chronic Diseases*, he urges examining the chronic disease "according to all the symptoms perceptible to the senses," or as he explains further in the *Organon*, "the physician sees, hears, and observes with his other senses what is altered and peculiar in the patient, he writes everything down exactly" that can be noticed about the patient, including "behaviors," "his activities, his way of life, his habits," "day-to-day activities, living habits, diet, domestic situation, and so on." He concludes, "The totality of these perceptible signs represent the entire extent of the sickness; together they constitute its true and only conceivable form."**

Furthermore, Hahnemann never limited his opposition only to the *"superficial concept of using external signs as a basis for prescription."* On the contrary, he clearly argues against the introduction of any *"preconceived notions and desultory classifications,"* *"mere conjecture"* or *"blind guesswork, preconceived ideas, extraordinary notions and presumptuous fiction."* He requires the homeopath to be *"independent of all speculation,"* free from prejudice in the development of the materia medica and in the examination of the patient. Instead Hahnemann argues that,

1. *The true medicinal and healing power... can only be observed when it is taken internally, acts upon the vital functions of the organism!*

2. *The manifestation of the active spirit of each individual remedial agent during its medicinal employment on human beings can alone inform the physician of the sphere of action of the medicine, as regards its curative power.*

3. *This improved healing art, i.e., the homœopathic, draws not its knowledge from those impure sources of the materia medica hitherto in use, pursues not that antiquated, dreamy, false path we have just pointed out, but follows the way consonant with nature. It administers no medicines to combat the diseases of mankind before testing experimentally their pure effects; that is, observing what changes each can produce in the health of a healthy man—this is pure materia medica.*

4. *Thus alone can the power of medicines on the human health be known; thus alone can their pure importance, the peculiar action of each drug, be exhibited clearly and manifestly, without any fallacy, any deception, and independent of all speculation.*

Dr. Andre Saine from Canada says "many modern homoeopaths claim that in Hahnemann's time the adaptive behaviors and habits of a plant or animal remedy were not included in the doctrine of signatures is, again, absolutely incorrect". For anyone familiar with the history of the doctrine of signatures, it is well known that people making use of signatures didn't impose limits to signatures such as only to the "shape or color of a plant;" instead signatures meant "any characteristic features." For instance, **Paracelsus** (1493-1541) introduced *Helleborus niger*, also known as Christmas flower, into European pharmacy. He recommended it to his patients over fifty years of age for its rejuvenating power, revealed by its signature of blossoming in wintertime.

Signatures, for **Paracelsus**, **Culpeper** (1616-1654) and many others, often needed elaborate interpretation unrelated to physical properties but tied to other characteristic features such as astrological associations. For instance, *because syphilis was a disease acquired from venal girls it was "signed" by Mercury, the god of the market. As a metal's name also pointed to the same god, this signature was the indication for mercury as the cure for syphilis. Similarly, gold, connected to the sun, was signed to be used in heart disease as the sun ruled the heart and circulation.*

**Jacob Boehme** (1575-1624), in **The Signature in All Things**, writes,

*1. Therefore the greatest understanding lies in the signature, wherein man may not only learn to know himself, but therein also he may learn to know the essence of all essences; for by the external form of all creatures, by their instigation, inclination, and desire, also by their sound, voice, and speech which they utter, the hidden spirit is known.*

2. *And now observe, as it stands in the power and predominance of the quality, so it is signed and marked externally in its outward form, signature, or figure; man in his speech, will, and behaviour, also with the form of the members which he has, and must use to that signature, his inward form is noted in the form of his face; and thus also is a beast, an herb, and the trees; everything as it is inwardly, in its innate virtue and quality, so it is outwardly signed.*

And **Oswaldus Crollius** (1560-1608), in his **Treatise of Signatures of Internal Things**, writes,

1. *The occult properties of plants; first, those endowed with life, and second, those destitute of life; are indicated by resemblances; for all exhibit to man by their signatures and characteristics, both their powers by which they can heal and in the diseases in which they are useful. Not only by their shapes, form and colours, but also by their actions and qualities, such as their retaining, or shedding their leaves. They indicate what kind of service they can render to man, and what are the particular members of his body, to which they are especially appropriate.*

*Therefore, plants exuding gums were considered to be good for the treatment of purulent conditions, and the leaves of the poplar or quaking aspen were used for shaking palsy. In short, the peculiarities noted in the actions of plants were supposed to give hints as to their effects on the human body. Sterile plants such as fern, lettuce, and willow were believed to lead to sterility, while fecund plants were said to promote fertility. Evergreen trees and plants and those that lived long were supposed to increase bodily vigor and so induce longevity. Heliotrope and marigold were prescribed so that subjects might "learn their duty to their sovereign;" King Charles mentions that "the Marigold observes the Sun more than my subjects*

*have done." Goats, allegedly skilled in the choice of herbs, were said to never be afflicted with ophthalmia, due to their practice of browsing on certain plants that other animals refused, and so the liver and the gall of the goat were used in eye troubles.*

All these concepts about signatures, which clearly include "actions and qualities" and more, are known to anyone familiar with the history of the doctrine of signatures. Hahnemann had all this in mind as he categorically rejected all speculations, including all signatures, as a way to divine the inner healing properties of medicines, throughout nearly fifty years of teaching. *On the other hand, this should not be confused with the fact that similitude can exist between the symptoms of the proving and the properties of the original source of medicines. The point, which needs to be made absolutely clear here, is that the attempt to guess the symptoms or indications for prescribing from the properties of the original substance is unreliable, unscientific and absolutely contrary to the homeopathic methodology.*

This should also not be confused with the post hoc associations sometimes made by our teachers on materia medica between the symptoms of the proving and characteristic features of the original substances. (eg. Yellowness of chelidonium) At best, these post hoc associations make studying the materia medica quaint and colorful but should never be confused with a priori postulations used for prescribing accordingly to the doctrine of signatures.

How much clearer could Hahnemann have been that it is absolutely fundamental to homeopathy that medicines must first be proved on the healthy and then confirmed in the sick and this without introducing any interpretation or speculation

whatsoever? In **paragraph 108 of the Organon** he writes, "There is no other possible way of correctly ascertaining the characteristic action of medicines on human health—no single surer, more natural way—than administering individual medicines experimentally to healthy people." In **paragraph 144** he writes, *"All conjecture, everything merely asserted or entirely fabricated, must be completely excluded from such a materia medica; everything must be the pure language of nature carefully and honestly interrogated."*

And in his **1830 preface to the Materia Medica Pura** he writes, *"He who has understood this will perceive that if a work on materia medica can reveal the precise qualities of medicines, it must be one from which all mere assumption and empty speculation about the reputed qualities of drugs are excluded, and which only records what medicines express, concerning their true mode of action in the symptoms they produce in the human body. Hence the practitioner will rejoice to find here a way in which he can remove the maladies of his fellow-creatures surely, rapidly, and permanently, and procure them the blessing of health with much greater certainty."*