

The Science and Art of Homeopathy



Eswara Das*

Centre for Health Informatics-Government of India, India

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***Corresponding author:** Eswara Das, Centre for Health Informatics-Government of India, India; Email: eswaradas@gmail.com

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Introduction

Homeopathy received massive public acceptance as a new medical system immediately after it was introduced by Dr Christian Frederick Samuel Hahnemann in early 18th century. During his life time, Hahnemann could introduce only limited number of medicines through drug proving and single medicine usage was the dictum in practice. As the new system gained popularity in the therapeutic domain, efforts were focused on introducing additional medicines and also to train more practitioners to meet the increasing demand. With the demise of Hahnemann in 1843, the artistic aspects of Homeopathic practice, which was gentle in comparison to the crude treatment prevailed at that time, got preference making it the more accepted medical method across the globe.

The fast growth in material science during 19th and 20th century brought in unprecedented transformation in technology. The world war, priority in treating the war casualties etc made the beginning of a new paradigm in health care. The high incidence of mortality from epidemics and pandemic diseases forced the health planners to look more towards hygiene and public health. Technological changes and inventions like blood circulation by William Harvey, n body dissections etc gave more understanding on the human system. Development of Physiology and pathology gave reasons to understand health and diseases better. Invention of thermometer to measure body temperature, stethoscope to learn more about the functions of heart, spigmomanometer to measure blood pressure and other medical instrumentation changed the diagnostic practices from subjective assessment of observations and interrogation of the patient brought in more objectivity in diagnosis. Introduction of antibiotics altered the medical approach towards sick. These changes brough in the evolution of scientific medicine. Gradually, the science of Homeopathy, brought in by Dr Hahnemann through his experimentations from 1810 till his death got stagnant. Due to the massive public acceptance and the unchallenged growth, Homeopathic fraternity did not felt the need to live with changes that was happening in other realms of science. The lethargy

preferred them to remain too orthodox, progressively taking the system to torpor. The conservative practitioners preferred to face the world with success stories, magic cures, *vitalisitic* theories etc. In fact, no major scientific investigation has ever happened in Homeopathy till it got challenged. A pathetic situation has emerged where even the teachers were not able to clearly define what the science is and what is the art in Homeopathy, making the students and its practitioners more confused.

Thus, the glorious past of Hahnemannian homeopathy did a volte face to darker ages in early 1900. Almost all colleges in USA and Canada closed several countries which patronized homeopathy abandoned it, some countries even banned. The assault from the groups concerned with the profiteering of phama products accelerated to stun homeopathy. Few dared to compare with witchcraft. Thus, the system got redundant in front of the fast-growing technological reformation in terms of its scientific up gradation.

Since 1970, there is a resurgence of acceptance to Homeopathic practice across the world. Organized education through the universities and competition with peers in the realm of science provided opportunity to critically analyze the concepts and principles of the system. The scientific fervor brought in based on the modern concepts in other fields of medicine including diagnostics provided opportunities to look Homeopathy with skepticism. Concurrently, more questions have started coming on the basis of the practice and its theories both from within and outside. Till recently the question on the science behind the principles of Homeopathy was mainly raised by the protagonists, but now the science in Homeopathy as we know and the science of Homeopathy that we don't know has become big question mark as challenges are forthcoming even from the liberalists on different methods of potentisation adopted to prepare medicines by different manufacturers, variations in the source material used in different countries in the preparation of same medicine, differing standards prescribed even for the same medicine in different pharmacopeia etc.. Thus, a neo-

phenomenon is emerging to understand homeopathy better than mere therapeutic modality, as we know now. These are basic requirement to label any system scientific and bound to validate the system rationally.

Science and Art in Medicine

Homeopathy considers art as well science as integral components in its clinical application. On a broader perspective, in every medical system there is quite a lot of science to theorize its concepts and uses art as a means to apply the science on patients. The ayurveda, chinese medicine, acupuncture, chiro practice, osteopathy, unani and other complementary practices which are based on powerful principles, considered as scientific at its time of origin, but, now is seen by many as redundant. These practices follow the approach based on their philosophy in managing illnesses and provide health care support to the patients. Similarly, homeopathy evolved principally due to the dogmatic practice prevailed in the western medicine of that time was very much a leading medical practice for over 200 years, now being questioned for its scientific basis. Allopathy, evolved from the Hippocratic aphorisms and used unprincipled treatment modalities for over 2000 years, now adopted scientific innovations and transformed as pure biomedicine. In spite of the fact that whether one medical system is more scientific or less scientific, public acceptance to treatment from these medical systems co exist in different countries and is contributing their strength by using the science as they understand to be correct and art as they consider necessary.

The extent on which one system presuppose the contemporary knowledge of science to explain its basis in a language understandable on a rational way makes it perceivably more scientific than other systems. If the knowledge is contemporary, that system becomes scientific and if not, it becomes unscientific. In all the traditional medical practice or the CAM therapies, their approach towards disease, patient and treatment remained constant. Therefore, it can be inferred that it is the time of assessment that make one medical system more scientific or less scientific and not its approach towards the patient. Thus, Homeopathy which evolved from the dogmatic practice of Allopathy is being considered less scientific today in comparison to the modern scientific medicine. The truth is that science, as it exists on a particular time, had provided the key to intellectual expansion. Homeopathy, many consider to be a cult and Hahnemann is a prophet!

It is seen that all the medical systems have evolved from different philosophy and civilizations based on the ethos and cultures of its origin. Therefore, to understand the science of a particular medical system, one has to understand the traditions from which it got codified. Those who understand this premise shall easily comprehend the science of that system and those who decline to acquaint with it shall perceive that system to be a redundant. Thus, for people who know Indian philosophy accept the *tridosha* theory of Ayurveda as scientific without any

prejudice. Same is the case with Homeopathy; those who believe in *vitalism*, accept it as a refined medical practice. The argument as to what is the science in a particular system continues amongst the academia without much significant impact on its public acceptability.

Allopathy that evolved from the Greek philosophy of *humoral* theory (Hippocrates, 460–370 BC) in medicine is now relying on reductionist science to give thrust to physical evidences of diseases and uses biologically active substances to treat illness. In that process during the last few years the scientific basis in that system went ahead with material evidences. Consequently, it gave advantage to explain several aspects of health, diseases and cure in more rational manner. Thus, Allopathy of yester years has become the modern scientific today with more rationality in explanation of causation of diseases from biological causes of germ theory, hereditary causes, genetic theories, BEINGS theory, Web of Causation theory, Wheel theory etc. Based on the understanding on causation the body is divided into systems and organs, compartmentalized treatment with multiple specializations. The flip side is that when we study any classical text book of modern medicine there are more diseases with unknown etiology and the art component of understanding the patient has become irrelevant. In that process a new concern has emerged for more care of health, resulting in labeling persons with even minor aberration in biochemical parameters as sick. Thus, there is havoc in society with more diseased individuals, more hospitals, more specialists to treat different systems and organs etc. The Cartesian concept of viewing mind and body as separate identity has taken away the holistic approach in health care in the name of modernizing scientific medicine.

On the other side, those who attribute more artistic approach on health consider every patient different. They propose that one standard treatment protocol to treat every patient is not possible. This concept is closer to homeopathic theory of individualization, now being supported with genetic theories and gene expression models. There is also a view that when two doctors see the same patient, their approach differs, and the inferences also are bound to differ. Thus, the standard treatment protocol, even for the same disease in different patient differs. This has lead to emergence of personalized treatment as a new approach in medicine. The protagonists of these concept questions the RCTs and other controlled models that are the backbone of research models in biomedicine.

The science in medicine consists of theories and principles that form the basis to rationally understand the system. This includes the process of the disease, its general management and the therapeutic tools and methods to treat illness or preserve health. While art in medicine is considered as the basis of understanding the patient and management of sickness including the selection of the medicine, the recent trend is to seek explanation more so satisfy others. The art includes understanding the constitution and temperament of the patient,

medical humanities, compassion towards the sick, sensitiveness to his illness, understanding the behavior in emotional distress etc. This varies from individual based on the circumstance and social aptitudes. There may be less rationality on the above attributes when scrutinize from a rationalistic view, especially the physical ailments on a modern medicine perspective. However, in circumstance dealing with patient, these attributes form a major factor. Thus, the art of medicine in Homeopathy deals with the whole gamut of doctor-patient relationship for example, a patient of typhoid, whether he is thirty or not, whether he prefers covering or uncovering, restless or calm is quite insignificant in biomedicine to understand the patient or for making prescription. The thrust given there is mainly on changes in bio- chemical parameters, evidenced through laboratory reports. Whereas Homoeopathy based on *vitalistic* philosophy, give significant importance on the emotion, feelings, understanding etc. to know the patient as also for prescription. Here, there is a definite co-relation with mind and body. That is why homoeopathy is considered holistic.

The following are the major factors that decide whether one is sick or otherwise

- a) The evidence of a disease felt or explained by the patient: a feeling that he is sick (subjective symptoms).
- b) The evidence of diseases elicited by the physician and or explained by the attendants: signs and objective observation etc.
- c) The evidence of diseases corroborated by clinical findings such as physical examination and laboratory data.
- d) Unless a physician get positive information on any two or more of the above in one patient, making a treatment protocol for the disease condition is unethical.

The science in Homeopathy

Homeopathy, though the second largest medical practice in the world, is greatly a misunderstood science in medicine. On one side it is gaining massive public acceptance and on the other side it gets ridicule from a section of the people who self claim to be the protagonist of science. Often the comments of some of these so-called stalwarts put back its wheel of development and create confusion mainly in the mind of the youngsters who opted to study Homeopathy and the patient who uses it. This makes it relevant to understand as to what is the scientific basis of Homeopathy that could be explained with the hard science as we know now and also art that a physician uses to understand the patient as well how he successfully uses it to treat his patient. This is more so important especially when the system is faced with credibility check in spite of its therapeutic merit and massive clinical evidence.

Innovation on fundamentals of Homeopathy

Science in homeopathy is the systematically organized body of knowledge on its concept, principles, theories and

practices. To bring the scientific basis of the system, one has to examine which of the principles, concepts and theories that are reproducible with the tools available in science as on now. Dr Hahnemann codified the knowledge of Homeopathy based on certain theories, principles and concepts. He postulated these concepts, after experiments and verification of the veracity of its reproducibility.

The core concept in Homeopathy is "*similia similibus curantur*", often known as *Similia* principle. After postulating this theory based on Cinchona experiment, Dr Hahnemann fortified it with supporting principles of *drug proving*, *potentisation* and *individualisation*. These were further strengthened with ancillary theories such as *chronic diseases (Miasm)*, *vital force (vital principle)* and *minimum dose*. Thus, his experiments starting from the famous peruvian bark trial and publication of *Essay on a New Principle for Ascertaining the Curative Powers of Drugs* in 1796 was the foundation of the core principle *Similia*. He expanded this concept further and converged his thoughts with more principles and theories and gifted a wholesome medical system by publishing the first edition of *Organon of Medicine* in 1810, and called it Homeopathy.

No honest effort has ever been made to understand as to which of his theories and principles are science and what otherwise are art. When questions started emerging on the foundation of science in the system, in the name of bringing scientific evidences, there started a blind race to investigate each and every concept, principle or theories with the same yardstick of modern science, more so to satisfy the protagonists rather than with the objective to understand Homeopathy better. Thus, convincing someone who does not want to see the truth of holistic care in Homeopathy has become a priority in Homeopathic investigation.

The biomedicine is based purely on experimental evidences and Homeopathy based on *vitalistic* concept is partly based on experimental science and partly based on experienced evidences. As the treatment based on biomedicine and homeopathy is different, the evidence on effectiveness should also be different. Coming to fundamental research, the supporting principles postulated by Hahnemann such as potentisation, drug proving and to extent individualization are the scientific basis of Homeopathy. These can be demonstrated with experimental science. Individualisation in Homeopathy is now gaining acceptance as personalized medicine or theranostics. Genetic concepts are used to theorize it. Ultra high dilutions used Homeopathy through potentisation is getting validation with nano-pharmacology (it may need more research and standardisation). Drug proving is demonstrable with existing scientific protocols as a hard science. More experimental evidences shall encapsulate the *similia* principle as a science based medicine. These are the areas of fundamental research, certainly lot more cutting edge research is needed urgently to bring Homeopathy as the refined medical science.

The Art in Homeopathy

Theory of chronic diseases (miasm), vital force and minimum dose are ancillary to the core concept of *Similia*. Even amongst hard core practitioners and teachers in Homeopathy, there are diverse views on its validity and application. We may leave these for the time being to remain as it is or efforts may be made to validate through experience based evidences.

Conclusion

In fact, the practice of clinical medicine in every medical system is an art as well as science; therefore we could say that the art and science of medicine are complementary. The fact is that all medical systems are scientific on its domain and uses the best artistic approach to understand the diseases and treat the patient.

Study of disease requires the aid of science. To understand diseases, its course and prognosis, complications etc a student of Homeopathy need to know hard physiology, biochemistry and pathology. When he goes to learn applied medicine, he needs to know more about nano pharmacology, bio physics, genetics, gene regulation, molecular genetics etc to understand the pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamic of Homeopathy. Innovation in the science of Homeopathy is the need of the hour and also the route to mainstream the system both for the critics as well its ardent followers. This should happen in the all the important components namely in education, research and drug development.



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