



Dr Hahnemann: as a Dietetist and Hygienist

Abstract: Dr HAHNEMANN differed in many ways from his contemporaries; he did so in no lesser degree as a Dietetist and Hygienist in his auxiliary management.

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Cupping, bloodletting, purgatives, the spring, and starvation cures, warm and cold water baths, hot air rooms in the larger towns had fallen to disuse. But worst of all, the sanitary arrangements for safeguarding the public and private health of the towns were hopeless. No drainage existed in the narrow, tortuous streets. The town had no public arrangement for disposal of refuse and decaying matter. Many were still surrounded by high confining walls and marshy town moats. There was rarely a sufficient provision of good drinking water leading to continual succession of epidemics, resulting in mortality of the inhabitants of towns and villages.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century of Dr HAHNEMANN'S practice, he was in variance with the whole science of Therapeutics, in particular with the customary use of medicines. He was forced to take refuge in hygiene and dietetics. If he wanted to give his patients advice and help or to supply those who were still healthy with any advice for its maintenance, he would write long consultation letters to his patients regarding diet and regimen.

In his consultation notes to his patients, Dr HAHNEMANN would describe the smallest details of food and drink for each meal and give exact prescriptions according to the condition of the individual requirements.

Dr HAHNEMANN RECOMMENDED

- ◆ Baths and ablutions.
- ◆ Cleanliness in rooms, beds and body linen.
- ◆ Admission of fresh air into houses.

- ◆ Regular exercise in open air (walks), free movement.
- ◆ Fresh water.
- ◆ Avoidance of excessive mental and physical exertion.
- ◆ Avoidance of violent emotions etc.
- ◆ For all unmarried people, Dr HAHNEMANN recommended marriage.

HAHNEMANN CONDEMNED

- ◆ Anything that polluted air eg too many flowers in the rooms, too many candles, rooms that are insufficiently aired, curtains over the doors.
- ◆ Excessive dampness.
- ◆ Wrong management of stoves, purposeless fumigation.
- ◆ The efficacy of 'cold water cures' (Hydrotherapy). He emphasized it only as a 'Physical means of assistance'.
- ◆ 'Home remedies'.

Dr HAHNEMANN SAYS.....

"Next to food, exercise is the most essential requirement of the animal mechanism—it is that which winds up the machinery.

Exercise and good air alone set all the humors in our body in motion to fill their appointed places and compel every secreting organ to give off its specific secretions, give power to the muscles and to the blood its deepest red colour; they refine the fluids so that they penetrate easily into the minute capillary vessels, strengthen the heart beats and bring about healthy digestion. They invite us to rest and sleep, which is a time of refreshment for

the production of new spirit and energy.”

BOOKS WRITTEN BY Dr HAHNEMANN

- ♦ Handbook for Mothers or Principles on the Education of Infants: Motto of the book: ‘The earliest education is the most important. The education of man begins at his birth”

The book emphatically discusses breast feeding, hygienic care of infants, midwifery, food habits of children, nutritional deficiencies in children, moral and character development. It has long chapters on ‘learning, reading and writing skills in children’, ‘upbringing of daughters’. The book emphasis that constitution of the children depends on the good constitution of the mother; the earliest education of a man depends on a woman’s care. Since man and woman cannot and ought not to be made exactly alike in their character and bodily constitution, it follows that they must not have the same education.

- ♦ **Friend of Health** (1792, 1795)

In this book, Dr HAHNEMANN has taken further steps ie from Personal to Social hygiene. He has given strict instructions for care of public health in infectious and contagious diseases. He made proposals for their treatment in general and isolation in hospitals and demanded the use of large airy rooms. He established clear and comprehensive principles for the discovery, removal and isolation of those attacked by contagious diseases and for the disinfection of all utensils and living-rooms used by such patients.

In the book, Dr HAHNEMANN, has also given attention to better treatment of prisoners from health point of view.

- ♦ **Directions for curing old sores and ulcers:** It had detailed hygienic counsels. Dr HAHNEMANN traces the origin of varicose

veins not only to a sedentary mode of life but also to compression of body by stays and garters and tight clothing, the latter especially in females.

- ♦ **Are obstacles to the attainment of simplicity and certainty in practical medicine insurmountable?** (1797): The general concepts of the book are:

- i) The errors of diet which have produced and encouraged the patient’s illness
- ii) The ordinary indifferent diet of people in general
- iii) The new diet prescribed by the doctor.
- iv) Diet of invalids is also discussed in the book.

The essence of Homoeopathic diet is not in striking limitation of the quantity or nutritive value of the food taken. It is not a starvation cure. Its aim is to remove everything which may prevent undisturbed development and course of the artificially produced disease. It forbids the use of anything which has a medicinal effect and therefore will disturb the action of the remedy taken. Homoeopathic diet is strict in acute illnesses while being relaxed in chronic diseases. But alcoholic drinks, coffee, spices, potherbs and chives are forbidden throughout.

Certain remedies require changes in rules for food and diet (eg: no acids when taking *Stramonium*, *Belladonna*, *Digitalis*, *Aconite* and *Hyocyamus* because their virtue is entirely destroyed by vegetable acids; no salted foods with *Mercury*, no coffee with *Opium* etc).

Dr HAHNEMANN advises doctors to take into account the influence of the soil, the nature of the country, the climate etc though similar illnesses are cured by the same drugs in all parts of the world. The most important thing is that everyone, especially those who are weak, should be hardened against all the imperceptible impressions and influences of the atmosphere and conditions of the soil.