

BOOK REVIEW

Samuel Hahnemann: The Founder of Homoeopathy

Name of the book: Samuel Hahnemann: The Founder of Homoeopathy

Author: Robert Jutte

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The life history of Dr. Hahnemann has always attracted historians and persons in the field of medicine; the reason being the distinctive manner and approach with which he discovered the homoeopathic system of medicine. He had the audacity to tell the medical world of his time that they needed to be modest in their conduct and approach in giving relief to the sufferer rather than increasing their suffering, and that he could establish this system of medicine, which today is considered as the safest system of treatment.

There are many authors who have written about his life, namely, Bradford (1895), Richard Haehl (1922), Ross Waugh Waugh Hobhouse (1933), Trevor M. Cook (2000), Fernando Dario Francois-Flores (2002), Prof. (Dr.) Diwan Harish Chand, Dr. Pritha Mehra (2011) and so on. Each one of these books provides glimpses of the personal and professional life or his contributions in the field of medicine. This book is the latest in the series and is published by one of the most prestigious institutes of Homoeopathy, the 'Institute for the History of Medicine,' run by the renowned Robert Bosch Foundation, Germany. The research library in this institute provides the homoeopathic archives with the assets of Dr. Samuel Hahnemann and his important pupils and successors. Thus, this book is unique, as the information available is

well-researched and authentic. The book had been originally published in the German language and it is good to have its English edition.

'History of Medicine' is one of the subjects that is taught in most of the postgraduate medical colleges. Whenever the name of Hippocrates comes, there are narrations about him and his contributions. Dr. Hahnemann holds the same respectful position in the homoeopathic fraternity and it is crucial that the generations to come should not forget his contributions toward the betterment of mankind.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter describes the status of the medical world in the late eighteenth century and how the death of the Austrian Emperor Leopold II raised questions regarding the available standards of medical treatment. Chapter two narrates the controversy about the date of birth of Dr. Hahnemann, his schooling, and his medical education. The third chapter gives details about his voyage to twenty odd places in Germany and also to parts of Europe, for establishing his medical practice, and finally settling at Torgau in 1805. During these 25 years, starting from 1780, he developed his skills, attained knowledge and experience in the field of Chemistry, Metallurgy, and so on. The minutest description of his life has been narrated here.

The next six years, elaborated in the next chapter are the most important, as this was the time when he concentrated on his medical practice and started documenting the cases he treated. It was for the first time he brought out his concept of medicine in the form of a booklet, 'Medicine of Experience'. In this tenure, he also conducted drug provings on healthy human beings to bring out their therapeutic effects.

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This he overtly mentions in the book, 'Fragmenta de viribus', which was equivalent to a pharmacopoeia at that time, and was published in 1805. Subsequently, he went a step ahead and started experimenting with medicines after diluting them. In 1807, he used the word 'Homoeopathy' for the system of medicine he found, and in 1810, the first edition of Organon was published. This chapter also talks about the other editions of Organon, certain important sections, and the spirit behind their publication.

With a firm belief in the system of medicine that he had discovered and to propagate it, he moved to Leipzig, and thought of teaching this science to academically trained physicians. How his vision came true and what efforts he had put in are elaborated in the fifth chapter of this book.

Court physician and pioneer of homoeopathy in Kothen is the next chapter, which elaborates the next fifteen years of his stay in Kothen. He got political recognition as a physician and was allowed to practice, prepare, and dispense homoeopathic medicines. Although he was appointed as a privy councilor, the challenges and troubles were not over and he moved out of this place also. Another interesting part that has been mentioned in this chapter is his daily regimen, his eating habits, his likes and dislikes regarding food, rather his own conviction about the diet that he followed strictly, and also recommended to his patients. His daily routine other than attending the patients included wide correspondence. He adhered to his routine till his old age.

It was interesting to note that he led a healthy life and never suffered from any serious illness. In his seventies also he looked young, as people who met him have expressed – 'his eyes betrayed the scientist; they shine with youthful enthusiasm; his features are sharp and animated'. Furthermore, having five editions of the Organon of Medicine during his lifetime reflected that he was a real researcher and always looked forward to improve upon his studies.

In the sixth chapter, the turmoil that he faced in his personal and professional life during this phase has been illustrated and the interaction and contributions of his followers and pupils is also reflected. He analyzed his study in terms of success and failure retrospectively and published a treatise on 'Chronic diseases: Their nature and homoeopathic treatment,' in 1828, and introduced the theory of miasms. In 1831, homoeopathy emerged as an established medical

discipline after combating the cholera epidemic and his dream of establishing a homoeopathic hospital and teaching institute came true.

The subsequent chapter talks about his life in Paris with his second wife, the developments that transpired in his life, and also his interaction with the homoeopaths from world over and also politicians in France. Many homoeopathic associations and societies came up with the increasing popularity of homoeopathy and Dr. Hahnemann was honored by them at different occasions. His extensive medical practice continued, along with scientific research and publishing of his studies till his death.

The last chapter is titled, 'The Honor of a Monument: The Hahnemann Cult'. It reports the love, gratitude, and admiration of homoeopaths all over the world for the founder of homoeopathy. He is considered to be 'undoubtedly the authority and exerted power even "from beyond the grave"'. Carl Orff has expressed that, "It is the best monument for a physician if his work remains part of the repertoire."

The book has been well written with all the narrations and original wordings by which one can feel that he/she knows Dr. Hahnemann from the core. Although the writing pattern is very interesting and one will not get bored, yet it is suggested that a few pictures of places, persons, writings, and so on, related to him, may be incorporated. The font and spacing are good enough for comfortable reading. All said and done, this piece of work is worth reading and can be downloaded free of cost from the virtual library at the website of the Institute for the History of Medicine, Robert Bosch Foundation (<http://www.igm-bosch.de>).

This book is a source of reference reading for a student, a professional, a physician, a historian or a common man who is interested to know about the life of a man who has inspired many.

There is a need to publish this book in print form, with inclusion of the 'Preface' or 'Introductory' chapter, which should give a brief about the book and also how the references are to be read. The referencing is very important and is to be understood well so that one can go back to the source from where the information has been gathered.

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