

Bahá'í Guidelines to Healing and the Role of Homoeopathy

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Abstract

While the Bahá'í Writings do not advocate any particular system of healing yet Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá have enunciated the fundamental principles of health and healing. The paper discusses the principles of the Homoeopathic system of medicine and compares them with those outlined in the Bahá'í Writings.

Introduction

In this paper, I am happy to introduce the friends to one of the alternative systems of therapeutics, namely, the Homoeopathic System of Healing Art, which will be covered in the first part. In the second part of my talk, I will present the principles of health and healing as enunciated in our Faith.

I will not attempt to compare directly the Homoeopathic principles with the Bahá'í guidelines, I will, however, highlight the commonalties, and leave it to the friends to consider its value, as the Universal House of Justice has clearly pointed out that "the Faith should not be associated with any particular school of medical theory or practice. It is left to each believer to decide for himself which doctors he should consult, bearing in mind the principles enunciated"¹ in the Writings.

¹ Universal House of Justice. *Letter dated 24 January 1977.*

HOMOEOPATHIC SYSTEM OF MEDICINE

History

The history of Homoeopathy begins with the discoveries of its founder, Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, a German physician (1755-1843). By the time he was 24 years old he was an accomplished Doctor. The system of Medicine then was very preliminary. Bloodletting and purging were common methods of treatment. He was soon disgusted with the prevalent system of medicine practised at that time, gave up his clinic and became a translator.

Hahnemann had an investigating and truth-seeking mind. In 1789, while translating the book of William Cullen, one of the leading physicians of the era, he was not satisfied with the reason given by Cullen for Peruvian bark (Cinchona)'s effectiveness in curing Malaria. Cullen had ascribed the usefulness of Peruvian bark (Cinchona) in treating Malaria to its bitter and astringent properties.

By nature Hahnemann was an audacious rebel, unafraid to speak his mind. He advocates audacity in his *Organon* using the Latin words, *Aude Sapere*, meaning, dare to be wise. Hahnemann objected to Cullen's reasoning and wrote a bold footnote to the effect that the efficacy of Peruvian bark must derive from some other factor because there were other mixtures and substances more bitter and astringent than cinchona, yet not effective in the treatment of malaria.

He then decided to experiment for himself to discover the reason Cinchona could cure Malaria. Thus he took four drachms of Cinchona extract twice a day, until his body responded to its toxic dose with fever, chill and other symptoms similar to malaria. Hahnemann suspected the reason this herb was beneficial in curing Malaria was because it produced paroxysms of chills and fever similar to those of the disease it was treating. The necessity for Methodical discovery of the medicinal properties of drugs was made apparent to him. He spent the next 6 years actively

experimenting on himself and his family and a small group of followers. In 1796, he wrote his first article regarding "The Law of Similars"².

He devoted the rest of his life to experimenting and developing the Philosophy as well as the *Materia Medica* of the Homoeopathic system of medicine. Subsequently, over 2000 medicines were proved.

Homoeopathy faced great persecution from the pharmacists and the physicians of the time. Hahnemann himself was driven from one city to another till the end of his life. Yet despite all the sufferings, Homoeopathy continued to grow and flourish. Homoeopathy is now popular in a number of countries namely, Germany, Great Britain, Scotland, France, Argentina, and India.

Sources of Homoeopathic Medicine

There are six main sources from which Homoeopathic medicines are prepared. These include:

Minerals: Copper, Gold, Silver, etc.

Plants: Greatest sources of medicines are plants.

Animals: Snakes, poison, spider, Bee, etc.

Human Beings: Parts of human beings like the hormones, bacteria grown in the intestines, diseased parts like the micro-organisms present in diseases like Tuberculosis, Pneumonia, etc.

Chemicals: Sulphuric acid, Nitric acid, etc.

Others: like X-Ray, Magnetic field, Uranium, etc.

² Hahnemann Samuel. *Organon of Medicine*, 6th edition. Translated by William Boericke. Reprint edition. New Delhi: B. Jain Publishers, 1992. Introduction.

Seven Cardinal Principles of Homoeopathy

1. Similia Similibus Curentus (Similar Cures Similar)

This is the basic underlying principle of Homoeopathy and the one from which its name is derived. According to this law, the signs and symptoms that a crude drug, when given in large, repeated doses, can cause in a healthy person, the same it can cure in disease.

2. Proving

Proving is the way in which the drug pictures are built up for each remedy and the curative properties of a drug are ascertained. The proving in Homoeopathy is not done on cats and mice or guinea-pigs but on healthy human beings, the reason being, disease manifests itself not merely by objective signs of sensory impression, but also by subjective symptoms of motor expression. We cannot record the subjective feelings of animals because they cannot express and communicate these feelings. Thus the Medicine to be proved is given in small doses, to healthy human beings (provers), until a reaction is experienced. Provers each maintain a diary in which they keep a careful record of all the symptoms developed in them, whether they affect the mind, body or emotions. After a few months of proving, all diaries are collected and the common symptoms that appeared in all provers are noted down. The most important symptoms are those that appeared in greatest number of provers.

There are also two other sources of information on drug properties namely the observances made in case of poisonings, accidental or otherwise and Clinical Observances which are the symptoms cured in patients unexpectedly taking a particular remedy. These too are noted and added to the Materia Medica.

3. Minimum Dose

One of the problems that Hahnemann faced was that of the dosage. Many of the substances which he used were highly toxic in their crude state and although diluting them reduced their side effects, it also, correspondingly decreased their curative powers. After much experimentation he came

across another extremely important discovery which proved to be the answer to the problem. After diluting the medicinal substance in water or alcohol, he vigorously shook the bottle containing the resulting dilution. He called this "shaking succussion". The whole process of alternately diluting and shaking the medicinal substance he called "potentisation" or "dynamization". The resulting remedy was not only freed from toxicity, but to his amazement its curative powers were actually increased, as use in clinical practice proved³.

4. Potency

The discovery that the remedies prepared by potentisation often became more powerful therapeutic agents than the original starting materials was a pure empirical observation. Remedies prepared by dilution and without succussion did not display this increasing therapeutic power. Hahnemann therefore named diluting and succusing his solutions 'potentisation', since this process increased the potency or power of the therapeutic agents.⁴

Hahnemann considered that distilled water, alcohol and lactose (milk sugar) were medicinally inert, so he diluted the medicines in these media. If the remedy was soluble in water or alcohol he mixed one part of the substance with ninety-nine parts of the liquid and submitted the dilution to a hundred vigorous succussions. In other words he banged the dilution on a leather-bound book a hundred times. The resulting dilution was called the first centesimal potency or 1c. He then mixed one drop of this dilution with ninety-nine parts of the water or alcohol and submitted it to another hundred succussions, and called it second centesimal potency or 2c. This he did up to 30 times to produce the 30c potency. This is called the centesimal scale. Today the whole process is usually carried out by machines and dilutions up to 100,000 are made.⁵

³ Garion-Hutchings Nigel and Susan. *Concise guide to Homoeopathy*. Australia: Element Books Ltd, 1993, p. 10

⁴ Gibson Sheila and Robin. *Homoeopathy for Everyone*. Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1987, p. 74

⁵ Garion-Hutchings Nigel and Susan. *Concise guide to Homoeopathy*. Australia: Element Books Ltd, 1993, p. 10

Insoluble materials are triturated (ground up) with lactose in dilutions of 1 in 10 or 1 in 100. After the sixth trituration such substances become soluble and dilution is then continued using the water/alcohol diluent.

After the sixth potency not even a molecule of the original substance is left and yet it exerts such influence which can cure a sick person quickly and without side effects.

Homoeopathic medicines are all sweet to taste and those prepared by succussion bear the smell of alcohol.

5. Single Remedy

This principle follows directly from the principle of cure by like. The Homoeopathic physician is trying to match his patient to the most like remedy, and it follows that the patient should resemble closely only one remedy at a time. The remedy may change, or in acute injuries more than one remedy may be required, but in classical Homoeopathy the remedies are administered one remedy at a time. This is logical on the grounds that the remedies were proved as a single remedy and not as mixtures, and mixtures of remedies may have effects which are different from those of their component parts.

6. Hering's law of Cure-The Law of the Directions of Cure

This was enunciated By Hahnemann's pupil, Dr. Constantine Hering, and is of practical use in deciding how a course of treatment is progressing. Hering stated that a cure should proceed: from above, downwards-from the head or upper regions of the body down towards the feet; from within, out- from the internal organs out to the joints or skin; from more important to less important organs- from the liver, heart or lung out to the joints or skin; from the present backwards in time- going back into the patient's medical history.

Hering realised that disease was the result of imbalance somewhere in the body and that if a true cure was to be effected, the imbalance had to be

corrected. He visualised it as being brought out from the deeper levels of the individual to the surface and finally dispersed altogether⁶.

7. Repetition of Remedy

In classical Homeopathy a single dose of high potency is given to the patient and, assuming improvement, is not repeated for as long as the patient continues to improve. It is only when improvement ceases or the patient begins to deteriorate again, that the dose is repeated. The low potencies are repeated more frequently depending on the disease.

Biochemic Homoeopathy

There are twelve Biochemic Tissue Remedies, that are a complementary part of Homoeopathy. The former, along with Homoeopathy acts as the opposite blade of the scissors; in completing the curative action of the medicines. Dr. Schussler wrote the treatise on the twelve Tissue Remedies and the Homoeopathic practitioners used it and later on wrote their experience of these remedies.

Theory of Schussler's Biochemic Method

"The idea upon which Biochemic therapeutics is based is the physiological fact that both the structure and vitality of the organs of the body are dependent upon certain necessary quantities and proper apportionment of its organic constituents.

The inorganic constituents are, in a very real sense, the material basis of the organs and tissues of the body, and are absolutely essential to their integrity of structure and functional activity. According to Schussler's theory, any disturbance in the molecular motion of these cell salts in living tissues, caused by a deficiency in the requisite amount, constitutes disease, which can be rectified and the requisite equilibrium re-established by administering the same mineral salts in small quantities"⁷.

⁶ Gibson Sheila and Robin. *Homoeopathy for Everyone*. Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1987, p. 77

⁷ Boerick & Dewey. *The Twelve Tissue Remedies of Schussler*. 6th edition. New Delhi: B. Jain Publishers, 1992, p. 15

The Constituents of the Human Organism

Blood consists of water, sugar, fat, albuminous substances, chloride of sodium, chloride of potash, fluoride of lime, silica, iron, lime, magnesia, soda and potash. The latter are combined with phosphoric, carbonic and Sulphuric acids. Thus the following 12 tissue remedies were prepared to supplement the deficiency of these constituents.

Calcarea Flourica	Kali Sulphuricum
Calcarea Phosphorica	Magnesia Phosphoricum
Calcarea Sulphurica	Natrum Muriaticum
Ferrum Phosphoricum	Natrum Phosphoricum
Kali Muriaticum	Natrum Sulphuricum
Kali Phosphoricum	Silicea

The biochemical therapeutics aid nature in her efforts to cure by supplying the natural remedies lacking in certain parts, that is, the inorganic cell-salts, and in this way corrects abnormal states of physiological chemistry.⁸

Since these medicines are given in diluted and potentised forms it will enter the blood and intercellular fluids from the mouth and oesophagus and restore disturbed function.

HEALTH AND HEALING FROM THE BAHÁ'Í PERSPECTIVE

Guidelines on Nature of Medicine

Treat Disease through Diet

While Bahá'u'lláh has strongly recommended visiting skilful physicians when sick, at the same time he has advised us to leave off medical treatment once health has been restored. Preference is to be given to

⁸ Boerick & Dewey. *The Twelve Tissue Remedies of Schussler*. 6th edition. New Delhi: B. Jain Publishers, 1992, p. 15

treatment first through diet and later through the use of single herb. He says, "Do not neglect medical treatment when it is necessary, but leave it off when health has been restored. Treat disease through diet, by preference, refraining from the use of drugs; and if you find what is required in a single herb, do not resort to a compound medication... Abstain from drugs when health is good, but administer them when necessary."⁹

Cures Which Are Not Repulsive

Cures in future should be agreeable to smell and taste of man. 'Abdu'l-Bahá enunciating this principle says, "The science of medicine is still in a condition of infancy; it has not reached maturity. But when it has reached this point, cures will be performed by things which are not repulsive to the smell and taste of man- that is to say, by aliments, fruits and vegetables which are agreeable to the taste and have an agreeable smell"¹⁰.

Biochemic Homoeopathy

Although the Bahá'í Faith is not "associated with any particular school of medical theory or practice", as explained by Shoghi Effendi yet we find in the writings a reference made by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the Biochemical Homoeopathy system of medicine, as a form of food medicine.

One of the friends of Persia wrote to Shoghi Effendi and asked this question: "Is it true that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said that biochemical homeopathy, which is a form of food medicine, is in conformity with the Bahá'í medical concept?" The beloved Guardian's reply to this question in a letter dated 25th November 1944 was as follows: "This statement is true, and the truth thereof will be revealed in the future." (The question and answer are translated from the Persian.)

⁹ Esslemont J.E. *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*. 5th edition. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980, p. 106

¹⁰ 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*. Translated by Laura C. Barney. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1994, p. 257

The Universal House of Justice has also asked us to inform you that it does not wish the above statement to be circulated in isolation from the many and varied other texts in the Writings on medicine. However, you may share it with any of your friends who are interested ¹¹.

Causes of Disease

In the writings there is a great emphasis on the importance of preventing diseases. By knowing what causes disease we can prevent disease.

1. Bodily or Physical Causes of Illness

Disturbance of the elements that compose the human being.

'Abdu'l-Bahá says, "The outer, physical causal factor in disease, however, is a disturbance in balance, the proportionate equilibrium of all those elements of which the human body is composed. To illustrate: the body of man is a compound of many constituent substances, each component being present in a prescribed amount, contributing to the essential equilibrium of the whole. So long as these constituents remain in their due proportion, according to the natural balance of the whole- that is, no component suffereth a change in its natural proportionate degree and balance, no component being either augmented or decreased- there will be no physical cause for the incursion of disease.

For example, the starch component must be present to a given amount, and the sugar to a given amount. So long as each remaineth in its natural proportion to the whole, there will be no cause for the onset of disease. When, however, these constituents vary as to their natural and due amounts- that is, when they are augmented or diminished- it is certain that this will provide for the inroads of disease"¹².

¹¹ Universal House of Justice. *Letter dated 12 November 1975*

¹² 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*. 1st edition. Great Britain: W & J Mackay, 1978, pp. 152-156

2. Sins - Potent Cause of Physical Ailments

“If mankind were free from the defilements of sin and waywardness and lived according to a natural, inborn equilibrium, without following wherever their passions led, it is undeniable that disease would no longer take the ascent, nor diversify with such intensity.”¹³

“But man hath perversely continued to serve his lustful appetites, and he would not content himself with simple foods. Rather, he prepared for himself food that was compounded of many ingredients, of substances differing one from the other. With this, and with the perpetrating of vile and ignoble acts, his attention was engrossed, and he abandoned the temperament and moderation of a natural way of life. The result was the engendering of disease both violent and diverse.”¹³

Thus ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains that cause of illness is related to defilements of sin and waywardness, indulgence in one’s persistent biological urges, lack of contentment with simple food and the lack of moderation. Today multitudes of people are weighed down with diseases that are the result of their indulgent nature. Alcoholism, drug abuse and freedom of sex have lead to innumerable physical and psychological diseases.

Alcohol when used chronically causes serious psychological diseases, behavioural problems, disorders of sleep, depression and nervousness. The side effects of heroin are suicidal tendencies, and bodily ailments like liver cirrhosis, pericarditis and infarction of blood.

Another social problem faced all over the world is that of freedom of sex. Venereal diseases and Aids are the serious problems which are the result of this freedom. The unwanted pregnancy especially of young girls aged 14-16 years is another serious issue in many countries of the world. Leaders and thinkers suggest solutions such as the proper use of family planning to solve these problems. They teach in schools how to use preventive measures to avoid unwanted pregnancies and Aids. What they

¹³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. 1st edition. Great Britain: W & J Mackay, 1978, pp. 152-153

don't examine is the cause of the problem which is freedom of sex and enslavement to one's carnal desires.

3. Emotional Causes of Illness

Negative emotions and lack of spiritual characteristics can affect our health to a great extent.

Bahá'u'lláh says, "Verily the most necessary thing is contentment under all circumstances; by this one is preserved from morbid conditions and from lassitude. Yield not to grief and sorrow: they cause the greatest misery. Jealousy consumeth the body and anger doth burn the liver: avoid these two as you would a lion."¹⁴

Thus a life of moderation and spiritual orientation, with especial attention to renouncing addictive substances, the purity of diet, leading a chaste and holy life, living the life and maintaining rectitude of conduct and obedience to the laws of God for this age is been strongly recommended in the Faith to promote physical, mental and spiritual health.

Conclusion

There are many systems of medicine being practised in the world, one of which is the Homeopathic system of medicine. It must however be made clear that none of the systems prevalent in the world at present can claim to be the be-all and end all of healing. According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá "the science of medicine is still in a condition of infancy; it has not reached maturity."¹⁵

Although the Biochemical system of medicine has been approved by 'Abdu'l-Bahá yet we must bear in mind that "No specific school of nutrition has been associated with Bahá'í teachings." and that "...The

¹⁴ Esslemont J.E. *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*. 5th edition. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980, p. 108

¹⁵ 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*. Translated by Laura C. Barney. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1994, p. 257

Faith should not be associated with any particular school of medical theory or practice. It is left to each believer to decide for himself which doctors he should consult, bearing in mind the principles enunciated above."¹⁶

In this paper the cardinal principles of Homoeopathy and the Bahá'í guidelines on health and healing have been described. The purpose of this paper is not to prove that Homoeopathy is the only system of healing but is a possible mode of treatment that could be trusted and considered by the Bahá'ís when sick.

Human beings are created noble and spiritual beings. Therefore all activities and endeavours should increase this nobility and safeguard this spiritual reality from debasement.

A state of complete health exists and can be maintained when spiritually, emotionally and physically the individual, fully aware of his true identity, is able to function at his real potential. He must be free from enslavement and in full control of his self. To avoid enslavement of body and mind we are forbidden the use of intoxicating drinks, opium and other mind-altering drugs and have been requested by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to renounce the use of tobacco. Man can enjoy a much healthier state of being by practising moderation and altering his diet to include simpler foods.

The sociomedical implications of observing premarital chastity and fidelity in marital relationships would be a marked decrease in venereal diseases and all its subsequent complications.

It is hoped that the paper has served its purpose of familiarising the reader with the basic tenets of the Homoeopathic system of medicine and the commonalities it has with the directives in the Bahá'í Faith on health and healing.

¹⁶ Universal House of Justice. *Letter dated 24 January 1977.*