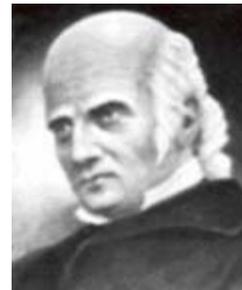


A sweet pill to swallow

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THE word 'homoeopathy' conjures up images of sweet white pills. To many they are just that and they question: 'How can sweet pills cure fevers, infections, and other serious diseases like cancer?' This sort of ignorance about the homoeopathy system is, unfortunately, common all over the world. Not many know that this system of medicine was introduced in India in about 1810, when the founder of homoeopathy, Dr Samuel Hahnemann, was alive.



**Dr Samuel Hahnemann:
Founder of the largest alternative system of medicine**

When cholera broke out in Bengal, two German geologists cured many sufferers through homoeopathy, and they came to be known as Cholera Doctors. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh was suffering from a certain ailment, Dr Honigberger, a student of Hahnemann, was invited to his court. It is the first documented instance of official patronage of homoeopathy in India, and Honigberger's portrait can be seen in the Maharaja Ranjit Singh Museum in Amritsar.

Today, 251 years after Hahnemann's birth, India has one central council, two research centres, 180 undergraduate and postgraduate colleges and two lakh practitioners. It has practitioners in almost all the countries of the world. The World Health Assembly has accepted it as the largest alternative system of medicine.

Although many might dismiss the efficacy of homoeopathy, recent research has shown that it is an effective medical system. Two research scholars from Zurich, B. Hochstrasser and P. Mattmann, in their scientific paper *Homoeopathy and Conventional Medicine in the Management of Pregnancy and Childbirth* published in 1994 in Switzerland, observe: "Studies on homoeopathic interventions in obstetrics report positive influence of homoeopathic remedies on uterine contractility and the evolution of childbirth. The only study comparing homoeopathic and conventional therapy in women with increased risk for contraction abnormalities found few differences between the treatments, except fewer cases of haemorrhage and decreased abnormal contractions in patients treated with homoeopathic remedies. Methodological difficulties in comparing homoeopathic and conventional medical intervention require specific research designs, taking into account the different theoretical and practical approaches of the two disciplines."

Hahnemann was born in West Germany on April 10, 1755. A trained allopathic doctor himself, he soon realised that the standard treatment created artificial diseases that were more harmful than the natural diseases. Worried at this sad state of affairs, he stopped his practice, and began searching for a better alternative. After a long struggle, and with the help of several students of his, he came up with a totally new system of medicine, which was cheap, effective, and did not resort to the then barbaric practice of bloodletting.

Hahnemann's attention was drawn towards nature and he reflected on the earth carrying the moon around it and the effect of waxing and waning of moon on the level of the sea. He further observed that a child suffering from chickenpox transmits chickenpox to another child coming near him (without touching). Hahnemann finally drew the following inferences:

- All medicinal substances should be tested on healthy human beings.
- The similarity between the symptoms produced by the medicine and that of the disease is the only guide to the prescription.
- Only potentised medicine, the dynamic power of which is obtained, should be administered in a slightly higher potency than the strength of the disease to enable the medicine to overpower and nullify the disease symptoms. When all the symptoms are removed, health is restored. Homoeopathy has an answer to all diseases the human race can be afflicted with and helps improve the quality of life of HIV/AIDS patients.