

ISWAR CHANDRA VIDYASAGAR'S THOUGHT ON HOMOEOPATHIC TREATMENT IN NINETEENTH CENTURY BENGAL

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Abstract:

Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar was a famous educationist and a social reformer. He was one of the biggest supporters of the Homoeopathy medical system. Dr. Rajendralal Dutta and Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar were famous Homoeopathy physicians. In the beginning, they had no faith in Homoeopathy treatment. Once, a difference of views arises between Vidyasagar and Mahendralal Sarkar about Homoeopathic treatment. But in the end, Mahendralal accepted Vidyasagar's view. When Burdwan district was struck by malaria, Rajendralal Dutta applied Homoeopathy treatment. In Karmatar, Vidyasagar loved to be with Santhals in his last life. Vidyasagar applied Homoeopathy treatment there. Homoeopathy was a better type of treatment at low cost and less setback. Vidyasagar collected many books for treating with Homoeopathy. Mahendralal and Vidyasagar became progressive spokes persons for practitioners of homeopathy. Vidyasagar himself was suffering from many diseases like asthma. He felt healthy by the Homoeopathy medical system. Vidyasagar established free Homoeopath clinics in many places. Sometimes he would treat himself. So Vidyasagar became a 'Physician Vidyasagar'. This article brings to fore the role of Vidyasagar from a different angle - a practitioner and a believer of the Homoeopathy medical system.

I

Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar was a famous educationist, education reformer, writer, linguist, teacher, philanthropist, social reformer, humanist and one of the most intellectuals of the world. He was a multi-talented person. Vidyasagar himself was suffering from many diseases and he saw many people suffering from the diseases. So Vidyasagar became 'Physician Vidyasagar'. He was one of the biggest supporters of the Homoeopathy medical system.

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Homoeopathy was a system of Therapeutics established in 1796 by Samuel Hahnemann. Samuel Hahnemann a German born doctor was aggravated enlarge Homoeopathy system of treatment by the words 'like cures like'. This therapist system focuses on symptoms rather than causes. After his death galaxies of prominent homeopathy Physicians all over the world emerged. In India this system was introduced in 1835. Rajendralal Dutta was one of the first practitioners to introduce homoeopathy treatment in Bengal. Bhudeb Mukhopadhyaya, Piyarilal Sarkar, Dinabondhu Nyayaratna, Binodebihary Mukhopadhyaya and many others made enormous contributions for development of Homoeopathy; Augustus Muller did great work in South.¹

In 1860s, Burdwan District was struck by Malaria. Epidemics like cholera, plague and malaria were diseases of Nineteenth century causing panic for Indians. In first half of nineteenth century, western Allopathic medical science was developed in Calcutta. But after 1850, indigenous systems of medicines like Yunani and Ayurveda as well as other new methods of homoeopathy took roots in India. Rajendralal Dutta was famous Homoeopathic physician for malaria victims.²

II

Dr. Rajendralal Dutta of Boubazar was the hero who introduced Homoeopathy in the local society of Kolkata. While studying at Hindu College, he joined the Medical College as an additional student for some time. His passion was for medical education; he first associated with Dr. Durgacharan Bandhapadhyaya, established an Allopathic treatment clinic and was encouraged to serve poor people. While he was engaged in this work, he was attracted to Homoeopathy treatment in collaboration with renowned Homoeopathy doctor Tannery. Apart from Tannery several Homoeopathy British doctors were also in Kolkata. Rajendralal Dutta tried to keep Dr. Tannery in Kolkata and established a Homoeopathic hospital with his help. Although the hospital ran for a few days, Dr. Rajendralal Dutta's interest in the Homoeopathic system did not diminish. He was a firm believer that through this treatment he would be able to be of great service to the poor and it would benefit them. In 1866, the famous Homoeopathy doctor Barani came to Kolkata; Rajendralal Dutta took more Homoeopathy education from him. Vidhyasagar was attracted to Homoeopathy by Rajendralal Dutta. Rajendralal Dutta was the first inspiration of Vidyasagar. When he removed the terrible disease of Vidyasagar's best friend Rajkrishna Bandhapadhyaya, Vidyasagar's faith in the effectiveness of this method was deepened. After being fascinated by the scarcity of medicines and the benefits of serving, Vidyasagar himself first became a physician.³

III

Mahendralal Sarkar was the famous Allopathy physician and he was organizer of the scientific movement in Bengal. He had little confidence in Homoeopathic treatment. He argued expressing considerable disregard for rational people like Vidyasagar and in those who believed in this treatment.⁴ Vidyasagar's brother Shambhuchandra Vidyaratnta gives a description of the controversy about Homoeopathy or Allopathy of Vidyasagar with Mahendralal: One day Mahendrababu and Vidyayasagar went to see honourable

Dwarakanath Mitra in Bhabanipur on the way home they were both travelling in the same vehicle. I was accompanying them in the vehicle. About Homoeopathic there was great discussion in the car which seemed to be a terrible contradiction on occasion, upon hearing that, I asked them to let me get down as your dispute has been ringing all the time in my ears and created headache.⁵

Mahendralal Sarkar recited Vidyasagar and said he did not condemn Homoeopathy but said let's test it. In the experiment, he favoured Homoeopathy. Mahendralal Sarkar became famous Homoeopath physician. During this time the influence of famous Homoeopath physician Barani has diminished. In 1869 Barani had to return home with an empty pocket.⁶

IV

Vidyasagar accepted the Homoeopathic system and he began to bring books from abroad at a huge cost. The role of the physicians Vidyasagar believed was not a leisure activity at all. He used to stay with medicines and would start treatment at the first opportunity.⁷ Khudiram Basu writes: I once had a stomach problem. Brajen Barujje and Pratap Majumder's drugs did not have any affect. Vidyasagar *Mahashay* came to see me and said, 'Do you want to live or want to die'? I smiled a little. He found the book and gave me the medicine. I was healthy after eating two or three doses. He practiced Homoeopathic medicine in a very special way. Lal Bihari Mitra had liver abscess. Dr. Mahendra checked him and gave the medicine, then Vidyasagar *Mahashay* came to see the patient and did not give him any medicine. He checked himself and Mitra was cured of his debilitating illness.⁸

Mahendralal and Vidyasagar became progressive spokespersons for practitioners of homoeopathy. Mahendralal had attended to the medical needs of Shri Ramakrishna while Vidyasagar's homoeopathy instructions once helped a friend in Varanasi successfully treat the wife of a local European magistrate. The two men contributed greatly to the spread of Homoeopathy in colonial India. The fact that Homoeopathy treatment had brought Vidyasagar proven relief in the 1860s was surely the profound reason for his faith in this medicine. Mahendralal demanded that there be an empirical proof of the success of Homeopathic remedies, gathering such proof would demonstrate the supremacy of Homoeopathy to Allopathy. With little or no formal training, Vidyasagar and Mahendralal were able to dispense cures for a range of common maladies such as colds and stomachaches.⁹

V

Vidyasagar's Homeopathic diaries offer yet another fascinating window into the mind and heart of a man for whom the scientific practice of Homeopathy was also the outgrowth of empathy. His diagnosis of patients including his wife Dinamayi Devi is often frank and clinical suggesting among other things that his patients felt enough at ease with him to share intimate details about their bowels, chests, stomachs and sexual organs. It was the quest to find clean air and a peaceful environment in which to shepherd his failing health that led Vidyasagar to build his 'Grove of Delight' in Karmatar in 1873. This was not long after he had taken up Homoeopathy and it was here that he set up a charitable dispensary on his own property and plunged energetically into treating the local Santhali population.¹⁰In

Karmatar, Vidyasagar loved to be with Santhals in the last stages of his life. Other tribes and Santhals reposed full confidence in him. The famous physician Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar turned to be a Homoeopath Physician of repute, only after being instigated by Vidyasagar. He convinced Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar that Homoeopathy was a better type of treatment at low cost and less setback. The example of Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar after being set, many doctors turned to become Homoeopath physicians and established that 'Like are cured by likes' was a better system of treatment.¹¹

Hand written diary of Vidyasagar on Homoeopathy medicine has been found. This diary was written in English. The first date of the diary was on 25 September, 1880 and the last date was on 13 September, 1883. Here are some parts from the diary¹²:

<p>"Harmohan: <i>A large boil on the left hip.</i></p> <p>25.9.80. Arnica 3 27.9.80. Hepar Sulphur 6 28.9.80. Silicea 6</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Cured 30.9.80."</i></p>
<p>"Mokhada Devi: <i>Cancer in the uterus of three years standing-continuous fever-great disgust for all food-excessive burning in the uterine region-left leg very much swollen and painful-exceeding restlessness day and night.</i></p> <p>06.10.80. Aceticumacidum 1 27.10.80 - - 3 31.10.80 Arsenicum 30."</p>
<p>"Sarat Kumari: <i>Hiccaugh-... nausea in the morning and after meal-vomiting of food-awakens from sleep with a start</i></p> <p>15.10.80 Sulphur 30, Night and morning</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>No improvement."</i></p>
<p>"Dinamayi Devi: <i>Thin watery evacuations-cutting pains in the bowels-violent chills; Excessive heat and thirst-</i></p> <p>15.10.80 Aconitium 1, Every 2 hours</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Cured 16.10.80."</i></p>
<p>"Mrinalini: <i>Loss of appetite; pains in the chest-nausea-Empty Evacuations-costiveness-abdomen tender to touch-general debility.</i></p> <p>18.10.80. Sulphur 30, Night and morning</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Cured 27.10.80."</i></p>
<p>"Suresachandra: <i>Sprain in the left ankle with severe pain and swelling</i></p> <p>02.11.80. Arnica, Internally and Externally</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Cured 04.11.80."</i></p>
<p>"Bhabasundari: <i>Copious, tenacious, yellowish discharge from the female genital organs-</i></p> <p>26.1.81. Aconitium 6, Thrice daily 1.2.81. Sepea 30, Thrice daily</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Cured 15.2.81."</i></p>
<p>"Taraknath Sanyal: <i>Pressing pain in stomach, as if a load or stone were in it after moderate supper-loss of appetite-great thirst.</i></p> <p>27.1.81. Calcarea C. 12, Nights and mornings</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Discontinued."</i></p>

“Sarat Kumari: *Almost daily some bloody discharge from the uterus for several weeks after the return of the long suppressed menses-discharge from the vagina, which bites like salt-Itching in the vagina from time to time... constant weakness and weariness exhaustion of the whole body-*
18.10.82. Sulphur 6, Every 4 hours.

Vidyasagar’s asthma was prolonged and extended into the winter especially. He had the habit of having hot tea in the morning and evening. One day he got some tea and it healed his asthma and he asked his servant, who made the tea today? The servant replied that he made it. Vidyasagar said, ‘Well, drinking it today is how my asthma tension is so low? Did you mix the dried ginger juice?’ The servant said nothing. Just like every other day I made it, but today other than that I prepared tea, but put water immediately without washing the kettle. ‘Bring the kettle, I’ll see’, said Vidyasagar. He was shocked and at what he saw when he opened the kettle. Surprisingly, a bit of hatred arose, but he was glad he had discovered a great source of curing asthma. He saw two cockroaches in the kettle. His asthma was reduced by half. He tried to find a way to make Homoeopathy drugs by combining cockroach and water.¹³

VI

When Vidyasagar was a famous man and arranged for the medical care of many ailing men, he taught himself Homoeopathic treatment with care and with his usual thoroughness for he wanted to be in service to the common man and he treated all the rich and poor with equal attention.¹⁴ Vidyasagar established free Homoeopath clinics in many places. He himself became a Homoeopathy Physician and perusal of the subject with intensity. Vidyasagar had immense faith in Homoeopathy. When he died, an advertisement in his name was published on Homoeopathy.¹⁵

“বিদ্যাসাগর ঔষধালয়”

হোমিওপ্যাথি। ২৬.৯.১২৯৮

যে মহাত্মা দানই মহদ্ধর্ম জ্ঞান করিয়া এই মরসংসারে অমরত্ব লাভ করিয়াছেন, আমরা সেই স্বর্গীয় দেব বিদ্যাসাগর মহাশয়ের পবিত্র নাম আমাদের ক্ষুদ্র ঔষধালয়ের শিরোপরে স্থাপন করিয়া দরিদ্র রোগীদিগকে আমাদের সধ্যমত ঔষধ বিতরণ করিয়া থাকি।

বহুবাজার

হিদুরাম বানুজীর লেন।

শ্রী গঙ্গেশ্বরচন্দ্র শর্মা

ম্যানেজার

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