

## RELEVANCE OF HAHNEMANN'S CONCEPT OF HEALTH IN THE ERA OF LIFESTYLE DISORDERS

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### ABSTRACT

Lifestyle diseases like type 2 diabetes mellitus, hypertension, obesity, cardiovascular disease, anxiety and depression are now the leading causes of death and disease globally. A number of modifiable characteristics of behaviour and psychosocial aspects contribute to all of these issues. Dr. Samuel Hahnemann describes health as the state of harmony of the dynamic vital force of the body rather than simply the absence of disease. His views, expressed in the Organon of Medicine, place great value on the individual, balance, susceptibility and the least complex intervention possible. The purpose of this article is to provide a critical evaluation of the implications of Hahnemann's notion of health in the current era of lifestyle diseases, both in terms of its philosophical and practical application to patient-centered, preventive and holistic care.

**KEYWORDS:** Hahnemann, vital force, lifestyle disorders, holistic health, prevention, individuality, homeopathy.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The current century is marked by the shift of the focus of Epidemiology from Infectious diseases to Non communicable diseases (NCD), also known as lifestyle diseases (Eg, Heart disease, Diabetes, COPD, and Mental Disorders) recognised as the major cause of mortality

in the world, accounting for 74% of deaths every year <sup>[1]</sup>. NCDs are significantly linked to Modifiable Risk factor - Unhealthy diet, Physical inactivity/Tobacco smoking, Alcohol consumption and Chronic stress. <sup>[1,2]</sup>

Despite technology and pharmacotherapy; Chronic Illnesses are increasing. The Health status of the Indian population has changed significantly over the last few decades as a result of changing Health Behaviours and Practices of People over time. <sup>[3]</sup>

The term "Lifestyle" was first coined by a Psychologist Alfred Adler in 1929, to describe the way in which a person lives.

It is the sum of the daily behaviours and individual choices that individuals make and are associated with either increasing or decreasing their health risk. <sup>[3]</sup> Conditions of psychological stress are highly correlated to Depression, Metabolic Syndrome, Ischaemic Heart Disease and Hypertension. <sup>[4]</sup> Increasing rates of Obesity and Insulin Resistance have been linked to diet and Sedentary Behaviour. <sup>[2]</sup>

Rather than being acute infectious illness, lifestyle disorders signify long-term disorganization; this idea is parallel to Hahnemann's view on chronic miasmatic disruption that is addressed in "The Chronic Diseases their unique nature and their homoeopathic treatment".

Hahnemann's idea of wellness, created in the late 1800s through the early 1900s, is dynamic and all-encompassing for the human body. The fundamental ideas in the Organon offer premises that address present anxieties regarding chronic lifestyle-causing ailments.

### ***1.1 Hahnemann's Concept of Health***

Samuel Hahnemann was one of the greatest geniuses that we have ever seen in the evolution of medical health. He had an understanding of lifestyle disease and how to prevent them. He knew the importance of fresh air, good nutrition, rest and hygiene [from his work "The Friend of Health" (200 year old!)]. <sup>[5][6]</sup>

Further in Aphorism 9 of Organon of Medicine, Dr.Hahnemann states that, in a healthy condition, the material body is animated by a spirit-like vital force that also keeps sensations and activities functioning harmoniously. <sup>[7]</sup>

*“..in the healthy condition of man, the spiritual vital force (autocracy), the dynamis that animates the material body (organism), rules with unbounded sway, and retains all the parts of the organism in admirable, harmonious, vital operation, as regards both sensations and functions, so that our indwelling, reason -gifted mind can freely employ this living, healthy instrument for the higher purpose of our existence.”<sup>[7]</sup>*

### **Thus, health is**

- A vital force's dynamic equilibrium.
- A condition of balanced mental, emotional, and physical functioning.
- Freedom from disruptions that hinder flexibility.

And disease, in his view, is a dynamic disruption of this life force that manifests as signs and symptoms.

He described health as a dynamic, harmonious balance of the vital force that includes mental, physical, and spiritual well-being rather than merely the absence of illness. It symbolises a condition in which the body is freely animated by this spirit-like energy, enabling a complete, imaginative, and meaningful human existence.<sup>[8]</sup>

He clarified in *The Chronic Diseases* that "miasms" or disruptions in the vital force were frequently the cause of chronic illnesses, which could be made worse by lifestyle and environmental factors.<sup>[9]</sup>

In the *Organon of Medicine*, Hahnemann famously wrote, "The physician's high and only mission is to restore the sick to health, to cure, as it is termed" (§1). Hahnemann believed that a doctor's highest duty was to restore this balance and "to cure."<sup>[7]</sup>

In today's public health paradigm, which increasingly acknowledges the significance of addressing the bio-psycho-social determinants of health, this holistic approach to health has significant relevance. Chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases are no longer only viewed through a medical lens in contemporary healthcare; instead, they are understood.<sup>[8]</sup>

In this way, Hahnemann's philosophy and contemporary public health agree that health is a holistic state of well-being influenced by social, mental, and physical elements rather than just the absence of disease. In order to improve long-term health, integrated care models that

target the underlying causes of chronic diseases—such as stress, nutrition, and socioeconomic factors—are becoming more widely recognised as multifaceted issues that call for all-encompassing, integrated care. Treatment strategies for these conditions include dietary modifications, physical activity, mental health support, and lifestyle modifications in addition to pharmaceutical interventions. This method reflects Hahnemann's view that achieving true health requires striking a balance between various aspects of wellbeing.<sup>[8]</sup>

The World Health Organization defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being," which is in line with Hahnemann's emphasis on balance. In this way, Hahnemann's philosophy and contemporary public health share the belief that health is a holistic state of well-being influenced by social, mental, and physical factors rather than just the absence of disease.<sup>[9]</sup>

### 1.2 Convergence Points

- Holistic understanding of the Individual -Modern science is increasingly recognising the Biopsychosocial model, a Patient Centred Treatment approach to understanding health & illness by the use of Biological (Genetics/Biochemistry) Psychological (mood/personality/behavioural) and Social (cultural/familial/socio-economic) factors.<sup>[10]</sup>

Similarly, Hahnemann combined both mental, emotional, and physical aspects of symptoms and therefore showed their totality. He supported this totality with a holistic lifestyle aspect where stress, emotional stress, and bad habits often cause many Lifestyle Diseases.

- Complete Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Well-being – World Health Organization defines Health as a Complete State of Physical – Mental, and Social – Well-Being and Not Just the Absence of Any Disease or Infirmary.<sup>[11]</sup> Likewise, Dr. Hahnemann in Organon of Medicine defines Health as the Absence of Any Morbid State That Impedes an Individual's Freedom to Live.
- The Expression of Lifestyle Disease is Individual to Each Person- For Instance, Two Diabetic Individuals will may have different Stress Responses or different symptoms. The Customizing of Treatment to meet the unique needs of each person is consistent with current personalized medicine approaches under evolutionary models that are being developed by Integrative Health Care and Genomics.
- Influence of Prevention and Regulation - Prevention and regulation were pivotal factors in the philosophy of health as outlined by Samuel Hahnemann. In the Organon of

Medicine, he made it clear that health is more than just having no symptoms or diseases; it encompasses restoring balance in one's body. Hahnemann believed that balance requires both the application of a medicine as well as the removal of any causes that would lead to disease. The author of *Organon* placed responsibility for removing "Obstacles to Cure" on the physician (Aphorisms 3 and 7). The physician must identify and eliminate whatever the "obstacles" are for the individual patient to obtain optimum health<sup>[7]</sup> (e.g., poor dietary choices, sedentary lifestyle, excessive mental stress, environmental toxins, addiction to tobacco/alcohol, emotional/psychological distress).

When referring to lifestyle diseases, these "Obstacles to Cure" correlate with "modifiable" risk factors including poor eating habits (e.g., excess calories), lack of exercise, excessive mental stress, lack of sleep, and substance abuse. Using high blood pressure as an example - high blood pressure can be treated with proper medications but will not be resolved without addressing the contributing factors such as "excessive sodium" and/or "mental stress". Therefore, regulation of "lifestyle" factors are crucial.

- Mental health and emotion health- The connection between Mental/emotional health and bodily Health; Samuel Hahnemann explained the connection between mental/emotional problems resulting in physical problems such as psychosomatic diseases.<sup>[7]</sup> This is consistent with today's research that demonstrates that chronic stress can create physical changes to develop non-communicable (NCDs).
- The miasmatic theory and chronic lifestyle demons- Samuel Hahnemann's understanding of chronic miasm (Psora, Sycosis, Syphilis) as a deep-seated predisposition that will cause chronic illness; there are similar modern-day equivalents, namely; genetic predisposition, epigenetic modification, chronic inflammation, and metabolic dysfunction. Although there are some differences in each of their definitions they both provide evidence for the presence of underlying constitutional weakness within each person who develops a chronic illness.<sup>[12]</sup>
- Importance to Public Health- The Hahnemann's framework promotes: Patient-Centred Care, Preventive Health, Healthy Lifestyle, Focus on Mental Health, Comprehensive Assessment.

There is an increasing awareness by healthcare systems that integrative medicine and behavioural change are very valuable in the era of the increasing prevalence of NCD's (Non-Communicable Diseases).<sup>[2]</sup>

### 1.3 CONCLUSION

In addressing today's public health issues, Dr. Samuel Hahnemann's teachings—especially those found in *The Chronic Diseases and Lesser Writings*—remain remarkably applicable. His focus on prevention, minimal intervention, holistic care, and addressing social and environmental determinants offers a philosophical basis for contemporary public health. The more general ideas expressed in his writings encourage creative methods of attaining health equity, sustainability, and empowerment in international health systems, even though his therapeutic methods need to be critically assessed. The discussion of public health tactics in the twenty-first century is enhanced by revisiting such historical viewpoints. Hahnemann's legacy is an enduring source of inspiration for both healthcare professionals and policymakers because his work not only enhances our current public health discourse but also stimulates creative approaches to achieving sustainability, empowerment, and equity in global health systems.

Hahnemann's definition of health continues to be pertinent in an era filled with lifestyle diseases. Besides biochemistry, his dynamic balance, individuality, prevention, and the unity of mind and body elucidate models of chronic disease. Modern medicine offers excellent diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, but Hahnemann's holistic perspective can complement the above by providing better patient and preventive care.

Hahnemann's contribution does not deny the value of modern science, but rather he adds to it by restoring the value of harmonious balance and personalized healing to modern medicine.

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