“Albrecht Von Haller and Homoeopathy”

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Abstract: - As we know that homeopathy is the 2nd most used medicinal system in the world. And the whole work of homeopathy is done at the dynamic level. How did we come to know about these hypocrites? We came to know this because of human experiments. Even though Dr. Hahnemann is called the father of homeopathy, but the one who first talked about human experiments was Albrecht von Haller. In this article, we have tried to know some such aspects of Albrecht von Haller. How did he contribute to homeopathy?

Keywords:- Homoeopathy, Healthy Human experiment, Footnote of Aph.109, Susceptibility.

Introduction:- Albrecht von Haller (also known as Albertus de Haller; was a Swiss anatomist, physiologist, naturalist, encyclopedist, bibliographer and poet. Born on 16 October 1708. He is considered as one of the most accomplished men in history of science. A pupil of Herman Boerhaave, he is often referred to as "the father of modern physiology. Haller was born into an old Swiss family at Bern. Prevented by long-continued ill-health from taking part in boyish sports, he had more opportunity for the development of his precocious mind. At the age of four, it is said, he used to read and expound the Bible to his father's servants; before he was ten he had sketched a Biblical Aramaic grammar, prepared a Greek and a Hebrew vocabulary, compiled a collection of two thousand biographies of famous men and women on the model of the great works of Bayle and Moréri, and written in Latin verse a satire on his tutor, who had warned him against a too great excursiveness. Albrecht von Haller contributed extensively to several branches of science. His work in embryology provided future naturalists with arguments in support of both of the theories of epigenesis and preformationism, and also raised important problems with each theory. Haller left behind a wealth of observational data in the field, useful in understanding how he arrived at his final conclusion.

Entry in medicine - Haller's attention had been directed to the profession of medicine while he was residing in the house of a physician at Biel after his father's death in 1721. While still a sickly and excessively shy youth, he went in his sixteenth year to the University of Tübingen (December 1723), where he studied under Elias Rudolph Camerarius Jr. and Johann Duvernoy. Dissatisfied with his progress, he in 1725 exchanged Tübingen for Leiden, where Boerhaave was in the zenith of his fame, and where Albinus had already begun to lecture in anatomy. At that university he graduated in May 1727, undertaking successfully in his thesis to prove that the so-called salivary duct, claimed as a recent discovery by Georg Daniel Coschwitz (1679–1729), was nothing more than a blood-vessel.

First work towards Homoeopathy : Sensibility and irritability are very important in homoeopathic treatment. The body acts towards any medicine for these reasons only. A man can respond to 30° potency when his body will be susceptible to that potency same law will be applicable to other potencies. In 1752, at the University of Göttingen, Haller published his thesis (De partibus corporis humani sensibilibus et iritabilibus) discussing the distinction between "sensibility" and "irritability" in organs, suggesting that nerves were "sensible" because of a person's ability to perceive contact while muscles were "irritable" because the fiber could measurably shorten on its own, regardless of a person's perception, when excited by a foreign body. He said "Of course, firstly the remedy must be proved on a healthy body, without being mixed with anything foreign; and when its odour and flavour have been ascertained, a tiny dose of it should be given and attention paid to all the changes of state that take place, what the pulse is, what heat there is, what sort of breathing and what exertions there are. Then in relation to the form of the phenomena in a healthy person from those exposed to it, you should move on to trials on a sick body..."

His work on "Nerve impulses" vs. "muscular contractions":- In 1757, he conducted a famous series of experiments to distinguish between nerve impulses and muscular contractions. Haller analyzed the irritability of muscle and the sensibility of nerves, studying circulation time and the automatic action of the heart. He was the first to give a detailed explanation of respiration. His publication “Elementa Physiologiae Carports Hamani” (Elements of Physiology, 1757-66) proved to be one of the influential works on the subject. Haller consistently broadened the field of anatomy, relating it to physiology by experimentation, and implemented dynamic rules to complex physiological problems. The approach of Albrecht von Haller was precise, analytical and objective. He was the first person to discover that only nerves produce sensation and only those parts of the body connected to the nervous system can undergo a sensation. Probably his most notable contribution was the formulation of the method of physiological research.

Words of Hahnemann for Albrecht von Haller:- Albrecht von Haller is quoted in the footnote to paragraph 108 in the Organon of Medicine, the principal work by the founder of homoeopathy, Samuel Hahnemann. In this paragraph, Hahnemann describes how the curative powers of individual medicines can only be ascertained through accurate observation of their specific effects on healthy persons:

"Not one single physician, as far as I know, during the previous two thousand five hundred years, thought of this so natural, so absolutely necessary and only genuine mode of testing medicines for their pure and peculiar effects in deranging the health of man, in order to learn what morbid state each medicine is capable of curing, except the great and immortal Albrecht von Haller. He alone, besides myself, saw the necessity of this (vide the Preface to the Pharmacopoeia Helvet., Basil, 1771, fol., p. 12); Nempe primum in corpore sano medela tentanda est, sine peregrina ulla miscela; odoreque et sapore ejus exploratis, exigua illiu dosis inge..."
ad omnes, quae inde contingunt, affectiones, quis pulsus, qui calor, quae respiratia, quanam excretiones, attendum. Inde ad ductum phaenomenorum, in sano obviorum, transeas ad experimenta in corpore aegroro," etc. But no one, not a single physician, attended to or followed up this invaluable hint."

The quotation from Haller's Preface may be translated from the Latin as follows: "Of course, firstly the remedy must be proved on a healthy body, without being mixed with anything foreign; and when its odour and flavour have been ascertained, a tiny dose of it should be given and attention paid to all the changes of state that take place, what the pulse is, what heat there is, what sort of breathing and what exertions there are. Then in relation to the form of the phenomena in a healthy person from those exposed to it, you should move on to trials on a sick body..."

Hellar’s thought regarding research: -
Haller stressed that research and teaching are quite different functions. The academies are for research and the universities are for teaching. Though professors at universities might, if they wished to, do some research their obligation was to transmit knowledge. Correspondingly, the academicians were to do original research and selected students might be admitted as auditors only... for the scientist the expectation of furthering the cause of truth was not in itself a strong enough impulse to labour in the academy. The stronger motivations were self-interest and vanity. These are best advanced in academies.

Conclusion: - Albrecht von Haller’s health began substantially declining after 1773. He died on December 12, 1777. He was 69 years old. Hahnemann was born on 10th April 1755 and in 1796 he first described similia similibus curenter. From this we can understand that many years after the death of Albrecht von Haller, the importance of proving on human research was understood by Hahnemann. No one paid attention to this thing before Hahnemann. If attention had been paid, perhaps homeopathy and action at dynamic level would have been discovered many years earlier.

References: -

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