

Pichian Sankaran

The Value of the Repertory

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THE VALUE OF THE REPERTORY

In the selection of the homoeopathic remedy, the repertory has a very useful and important role to play. It is possible that some prescribers who have a profound knowledge of Materia Medica at their command and who are endowed with a prodigious memory are able to prescribe successfully for cases with out the need of repertories but such knowledge and memory are indeed very scarce. These are not to be expected in the average homoeopath. We must recognise that the homoeopathic Materia Medica consists of two thousand or more drugs and out of these the average homoeopath may have a good grasp of only about forty or fifty. or at the most a hundred drugs. Further, each of these drugs has in its symptomatology hundreds or even thousands of symptoms out of which even a good homoeopath may be able to recollect only fifty or a hundred symptoms. We can, therefore, realise that the task of remembering all the symptoms of all the drugs is a hopeless one beyond human capacity and, therefore, some form of a reference book is quite necessary.

Of course, it is a matter of good fortune to us that in many of the cases, certain outstanding characteristic symptoms of particular drugs, the so-called keynote symptoms, repeatedly present themselves, either singly or in particular groups or combinations, so that one who is well conversant with these keynote symptoms as described in Allen's Keynotes or Hash's Leaders or some such book can select the similimum fairly well. Yet if we can visualise the myriads of symptoms and combinations of symptoms which can present themselves before us in their ever changing mosaic forms we shall feel more confident and safer with a reference book-the repertory at our side.

Renner quotes J. H. Clarke as saying "It is impossible to practice homoeopathy as it should be practiced without the aid of repertories".

Grimmer states "Repertory prescribing makes for greater accuracy and in the long run is a time saver, and with its use one grows in the knowledge of the Materia Medica "

We have to appreciate the fact that the repertory will only help us to come to a group of drugs; it may merely indicate to us the list of possible drugs. It is for us to study this group carefully and select out of the group that one drug which fits our patient most fully the similitimum. The repertory is not a mechanical brain. It will not straightaway take us to the correct drug. It does not do our thinking for us. It does not replace our brain. It is only like a dictionary or a thesaurus in which various shades of meaning are given for each word, out of which we have to select the one meaning that is relevant to our context.

The selection of the correct drug, the similitimum is an extremely delicate and intricate task. There are so many variable factors to be taken into account-the accuracy of observation and expression on the part of the patient, the ability of the physician to observe and understand the patient's sufferings and to properly interpret them, the incomplete nature of our Materia Medica itself etc , etc. So a good physician must take care not only to minimise the variability of all these factors but to see that these uncertainties are not further added to by his placing complete faith and reliance on his incomplete knowledge and imperfect memory. He will try to take the aid of all possible sources of help in order to succeed in his task. The repertory offers such a medium which wisely used considerably lightens the task of the prescriber and helps accurate selection of the similitimum.

No doubt all repertories have their own imperfections-some of them may even confuse and discourage a beginner-but if one can understand and overcome these little defects



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