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BJAIN

Interview with Dr Rajesh Shah



Dr Rajesh Shah is a globally known practitioner turned researcher, teacher, author, entrepreneur, and a homeopathy activist. He is the founder of Life Force Homeopathy, Mumbai. He is on the forefront of initiating awareness about revamping the nosodes and identifying the need for regulations for New Drug Discovery in homeopathy. He is a man on a mission working not only on the new drug research but also focusing on helping set the required regulation which is currently missing. He has introduced a 17-step method of developing new nosodes. His original research on Standardisation of Potentisation is appreciated by many scientists. He has conducted pioneering research and introduced several new drugs including HIV nosode, Hepatitis C nosode, Capsaicin, Hydroquinone, Cancer nosode, Plasmodium Falciparum nosode, Mycobacterium Tuberculosis nosode and more. Early this year, he received an award from the Ministry of AYUSH as 'Independent Researcher', from the hands of the vice-president of India. Being a practitioner, he is conducting various kind of research by collaborating with reputed institutes such as Haffkine Institute, IIT-B, ICT, Nair Hospital, ACTREC (Tata), Mumbai University, etc.

Dr Shah has been listed in the book of world records for treating patients from the highest number of countries. Currently, his patient base is 180 countries. He is also a pioneer of Online medical practice and the use of e-commerce in medical practice since 1996. His clinic is one of the first paperless clinics in the world. Twenty of his research papers are published in peer-reviewed, international journals. He has widely conducted seminars in about twenty countries and he is a regular speaker at various international conferences. One of his recent books titled 'Phenomena and Facets: A New Approach in Homeopathic Prescribing' was published recently by B Jain publishers. He is Secretary of Global Homeopathy Foundation. He works in Mumbai with his team of about one hundred-people including thirty-five doctors.

ED: Editor (ED): Please tell us about how you started the journey as a homeopathic professional. Please give an overview of your involvement with homeopathy over three decades.

Dr Rajesh Shah (RS): After graduating from CMPH Medical College under Mumbai University, I started my practice in a suburb of Mumbai in a humble clinic but with high aspirations. My conviction in the system of homeopathy along with sincerity and hard work helped me build a satisfying practice. As a part of an organising body which invited some foreign speakers for seminars in India, which silently inspired me to think global.

Sitting in a 60 sq ft size shared, rented clinic in 1985, I dreamt of having global practice! Over time I learnt that if you dream with a bigger vision for the welfare of others, and also put sustained

efforts, the higher forces help you materialize it. By the year 2000, our clinic was in the book of world records for treating patients from the highest number of countries. Anyway, that is not very important. What is important is those dreams related to the scientific growth of homeopathy, which is still not fully materialised. My mind, heart, and soul are directed towards full filling them.

As my practice became global, a large number of patients with difficult diseases started approaching me. Some of them responded well, many didn't. I realised the need for more potent medicines, which motivated me to work for New Drug Development (NDD). This process started around 1997.

Slowly, it was realised that New Drug Discovery (NDD) and related fields are the areas where

I can devote my entire lifetime. I am trying to work in this space for the last twenty years and learning through exploration.

ED: Today, you are an epicenter of the movement to create guidelines for introducing new homeopathic remedies in the pharmacopeias and Materia Medica, especially in India. Why and when did you feel the need to raise this issue on a wider scale?

RS: No medical science can grow without continuous research and development of new drugs. For new drug development, there should be clearly defined rules and guidelines. Since no major homeopathic drugs have been systematically introduced from India in the last 100 years, we do not have required regulations in place, especially for the medicines such as nosodes sourced from biological materials.

While working on developing new drugs, I have been working hard to

draw the attention of the profession and the Ministry to identify the gaps and facilitate research. I am happy to share that the Ministry has appreciated the importance of the New Drug Discovery and have agreed in principle to accelerate the process. I am waiting for clear, doable and simplified guidelines so that more researchers could work in this direction.

In last one decade, my team has scientifically developed several new drugs including many nosodes and have conducted many scientific experiments demonstrating the efficacy of new drugs in lab-models, plants, animals, and humans. Twenty peer-reviewed papers are published (or under review) based on the New Drug Research. In the process, the futuristic method of approaching homoeopathy has been demonstrated.

These new medicines are gifts from India to the world. I want them to be used by the profession across the world.

ED: *We already have over 3000 drugs. Why do you think we should have more drugs? Why are you insisting on New Drug Development?*

RS: There are two major reasons why we need new drugs. One, as the diseases are getting more complex and difficult to treat, we need more potent and effective medicines to combat them. We have about 50 major polychrests, constitutional drugs, and 6 commonly used nosodes, all developed over 140 to 180 years ago. It is surprising that many practitioners did not realise that the inefficiency of homoeopathy in treating chronic and complicated diseases is due to the lack of new drugs. After Hahnemann's 95 drugs, not many major polychrests have been added. The essential part of every system of medicine is an expanding repertoire of newer drugs.

Secondly, most of our medicines

were developed and drug-proved over 100 years ago (before 1890), many of which are less relevant today for two major reasons,

- a. The exact substances used in those years are difficult to procure (eg. *Causticum*, *Calcarea carb*, *Ambra gresia*, *Sepia*, *Lac caninum*, *Medorhinum*, etc.)
- b. Since microbiology, pharmacology, chemistry, biology, and engineering have evolved enormously in the last 60-70 years, it is unscientific for homoeopathy to depend on 100 years old back-potencies to make the dilutions today. Did you know that the remedy *Tuberculinum* available in the market in India is prepared from the back-potency of some drops of the presumed back-potency made by Samuel Swan in around the year 1875? I firmly believe that the science of Homoeopathy cannot survive on the backbone of back-potencies.

I have proposed to the Ministry to revamp 200 major drugs scientifically, including the preparation, provings, pre-clinical and clinical studies, mechanism of action, in phases. India has used homoeopathy for 200 years without introducing a single major polychrest, now is the time for India to gift the scientific version of homoeopathy to the world.

ED: *Can you share the modern concept of developing a new homoeopathy drug with an example?*

RS: Due to the advancements in the areas of all allied sciences, the homeopathic drug development should use the latest techniques. I will give you an example of HIV nosode using all the latest technology and biosafety measures by following the international guidelines. (None of the old nosodes is made in that way.) Also, we upgraded the

old method of making nosodes as it was obsolete. The source material containing the HIV virus with genotypes was qualitatively and quantitatively standardized, which was never the case with any of our old nosodes. The process of potentiation was standardised. Double-blind, placebo-controlled drug proving was conducted with the permission of Ethics Committee formed as per the ICMR guidelines. Qualitative and Quantitative Indices used for analysing the data of the drug proving. (Done for the first time ever.) An observational study (clinical trial) was conducted to see the effects of the HIV nosode in HIV infected patients and its anti-HIV efficacy was documented. (First ever Nosode trial to show specific anti-infection effects.)

In addition, an in-vitro study in laboratory conducted by leading molecular biologist Dr AR Khuda-Bukhsh has demonstrated not only the anti-cancer effects HIV nosode but also shown the mechanisms of action of HIV nosode against cancer. Developing and understating new drugs in this manner is the future of homeopathy.

ED: *Your approach is innovative and modern. Do you recommend any scientific innovation in other areas of homoeopathic practice?*

RS: Unfortunately, homoeopathy is not considered a science by today's scientists due to the fact that homoeopathy never grew up as a science but as philosophy. It is a big topic, may be discussed separately some other day. In brief, many aspects of homoeopathy such as potentiation, high-dilution, totality, susceptibility, constitution, miasms, individualisation, similimum, doses (single and repetition), etc. need review, debate, validation and overhauling in the light of modern sciences.

ED: *What future potential do you see for India, the Indian homoeopaths,*

and the young students?

RS: We are at a crossroad. Today, homeopathy science is facing an unprecedented challenge of survival on one side and a huge growth-potential on the other. The Indian scientists including chemists, engineers, biologists, physicists, pharmacologists, etc. have contributed immensely in the last two decades. Much more research and overhauling of education will be required if want homeopathy to survive.

I strongly believe that what has brought us here will not take us to the next level. The potential is huge only if all the stack holders wake up and work aggressively towards the action plan.

ED: *What are your thoughts on the current status of homeopathy as a medical science?*

RS: In my humble opinion, the practice of homeopathy in the current format is not future-friendly. If we want homeopathy to survive, this generation will have to work hard to bring overriding and transformational changes in the areas of:

- a. Fundamental understanding of the science being homeopathy
- b. Translate the learning from the fundamental research into the Education
- c. Empower the practice and the practitioners with the evolved and revised upgraded knowledge
- d. Reform the materia medica using the latest scientific technology
- e. Upgrade the regulations for futuristic growth
- f. Transmuting philosophical system of homeopathy into a scientific method for healthcare.

As the transformation of 'Orthodox medicine' (so-called allopathy) into Modern Medicine was not done by the 'allopaths'

but by the scientists, technologists and engineers, similarly, for a revolution in homeopathy, we will need the support of the scientists from various fields.

ED: *The government bodies such as CCH, CCRH have the maximum number of homeopathic hospitals, dispensaries, colleges, practitioners on their rolls. Their potential is immense for the turnaround of homeopathy. What would be your advice to them?*

RS: In my perception, the strength and the potential of having a dedicated Ministry, CCH, CCRH, HPL need to be more efficiently channelised. For example, it is unfortunate that many of our 215 homeopathic medical colleges using significant national resources are producing over 12000 homeopaths who are often below-average and unemployable. It is a huge loss of opportunity for the nation. I would like to see the homeopathic graduates getting a world-class medical education and the colleges having a built-in research center, just like Oxford, Stanford, and John Hopkin. Why not? What we need is vision, focus and skilled execution.

Fortunately, CCRH is doing better than before. However, since our backlog is so profound that they will need more aggressive, disruptive and result-oriented approach. CCRH must act fast on setting up regulation for New Drug Discovery and also for scientific revamping and regulation of thousands of drugs outside of the Pharmacopoeia (including Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia of India, HPUS, EP, and BP). The biggest challenge today is establishing homeopathy as a science.

My submission to the Ministry is to set up an independent Scientific Body dedicated to establishing homeopathy as a science in four

years. If there could be entities like NHMRC in Australia to dedicated to prove homeopathy wrong, why shouldn't we have a body to prove it right?

9. ED: *What are your thoughts on the professional homeopathic associations in India or internationally?*

RS: The medical professional organizations abroad and in India are known to exercise their roles by considering the needs of the members and the profession. The homeopathic organisations in India have yet to identify their actual needs and demand required support from the government in terms of missing regulations for quality medicines, improved education standards, and aggressive research. They will have to grow beyond garlanding each other and learn to focus on hardcore issues the profession is facing. The powers of the professional associations are not fully utilized in India.

ED: *Tell us something about Global Homeopathy Foundation (GHF) and its purpose.*

RS: GHF was launched with an idea to have a non-political, non-commercial, focus group working on the burning issues the profession has. World Homeopathy Summit was organized under GHF with the intent to demonstrate the science behind homeopathy. We could successfully create a good orientation about research. One of the after-effects of the Summit is improved quality of conferences in India to a certain extent. I often tell my colleagues at GHF that our objective is to work in the areas of research, regulation, education, practice and promotion of homeopathy, and not to become an event management group.

ED: *Research in the field of homeopathy is being conducted by various scientists. What is the relevance of these research and how*

will it benefit the practitioners?

RS: We have evolved from bullock-carts to rockets, from calculators to supercomputers, from wired telephones to smart-phones, from leeches to lasers, and more. Each and every field has incorporated technology for advancement except homeopathy. Your mobile changes its version every two years. Due to the absolute lack of research (except in last two decades) homeopathy has lagged behind. We need a higher version of homeopathy which is overdue for over 100 years.

Scientific research in various areas within the profession is the only solution to uplift the current status of homeopathy. With the recent research, our understanding of the nature of homeopathic medicine is changing from energy medicine to nano-pharmaceutical medicine. After about 200 years of existence, the efficacy of homeopathy has been now demonstrated for the first time in controlled trials, in in-vitro and animal models. New drugs are getting scientifically developed and tested for the first time. Physicists, chemists, engineers, biologist, and mathematicians are getting involved in homeopathic research for the first time in the history of homeopathy. These are some of the gigantic developments, which are going to empower the practitioners with more efficient and reliable methods in practice. A lot more has to be accomplished.

ED: *Homeopathy has always faced challenges and is being criticised at various platforms. So, how do you see the scope of Homeopathy in near future and what advice would you like to give to the homeopaths today.*

RS: The criticisms faced by homeopathy today is the consequence of the paucity of research in last hundred years. Personally, I never blame any group or person for criticising

homeopathy. Actually, homeopathy deserves criticism. Homeopathy and Vaccinations were born in the same year. Vaccination grew up as science by incorporating the latest techniques, homeopathy did not. Similarly, Surgery has advanced because of the inclusion of engineering. I see profound scope for homeopathy provided we streamline the system, revamp certain areas and revolutionise our thought process. My friendly suggestion to the fellow practitioners is to develop a more scientific attitude in clinical practice.

The homeopaths must realise that homeopathy is a science, not a religion.

ED: *Tell us something about your journey from a graduate to a renounced speaker?*

RS: I consider myself a humble homeopathy activist, practitioner, researcher, and teacher. As a committed homeopathic professional for over 33 years, I have learnt a lot by from fellow homeopaths, critics, medical researchers, and patients. I was blessed in getting a rare opportunity of treating patients with difficult diseases from across the world, which helped me to get much deeper insight into various dimensions of homeopathy. My mind is always concerned about those patients who may not have responded to the treatment, and keep inspiring the researcher within me.

ED: *What are the scope and limitations of homeopathy in the treatment of the ailments of the modern world?*

RS: The curability of any diseases depends on the reversibility of the pathology and the matching of the pathogenesis of the disease with that of the remedy used. Simply matching the symptoms does not assure the cure of the disease. The new generation homeopaths have

to understand this dimension. We need new and targeted treatment and drugs to manage complex diseases.

ED: *What is the scope of homeopathy in foreign countries and what will be your piece of advice for the homeopaths willing to practice abroad?*

RS: Currently, the scope of homeopathic practice in Europe, USA, Australia is limited for homeopaths from India. My only suggestions to young homeopaths would be to focus on strengthening clinical acumen and in-depth knowledge of homeopathy which should not be based on fanciful theories. Also, try to learn and practice a high level of professional conduct.

ED: *What do you feel is the most gratifying for you as a professional – medical practice, teaching, writing or research? Or, what has been/will be your most gratifying achievement as a homeopath?*

RS: Honestly speaking, I do not feel I have achieved anything significant. As a homeopathy activist, I am constantly struggling for a higher version of myself and that of homeopathy. One of my major objectives was to scientifically prove the efficacy of homeopathy. I am personally satisfied because that is achieved through a series of experiments in the last fifteen years. I think I will be happier if the regulation for NDD is set in India for which I am moving pillar to post for the last ten years. I am positive for futuristic developments for homeopathy in India.

I would like to see myself as an exploratory researcher and bring the research-findings for the current and the forthcoming generations of practitioners through teachings. My personal aspiration is to make homeopathy transferable to the future generation.

