

Review Article

Doctrine of Signatures – Facts Unveiled

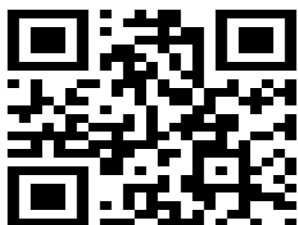
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ABSTRACT

It is believed that God created and marked everything with a sign (signature). Symbolism, intuition, biological observation, and the study of the medicinal properties serve as guides in the Doctrine of Signatures. According to DOS, physical characteristics of plants (including shape, color, texture, and smell) reveal their therapeutic value. This article focuses on the history and origin, gives an overview about the views of certain stalwarts in the field of homoeopathy on doctrine of signatures.

Keywords: Doctrine of Signature, Biological, Physiological, Physical, Homoeopathy



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INTRODUCTION

The evolution of the Doctrine of Signatures is presented, with reference to a physical as well as mental/spiritual mode of relating nature's medicinal substances to the human symptoms. Modern science offers additional dimensions by relating physiological processes to physiology of disease

The **doctrine of signatures**, dating from the time of Dioscorides and Galen, states that herbs resembling various parts of the body can be used by herbalists to treat ailments of those body parts. The writings of Jakob Böhme (1575–1624) spread the doctrine of signatures. He suggested that God marked objects with a sign, or “signature”, for their purpose. Plants bearing parts that resembled human body-parts, animals, or other objects were thought to have useful relevance to those parts, animals or objects. His prophetic vision induced him to write on the signature of things created by God. His philosophical work —Signature Rerum (signature of all things) became very popular and later on it was adapted in to the field of medicine.

Paracelsus said, “You bring together the

same anatomy of the herb and the same anatomy of the origin—and that is the beginning.”⁴ According to Paracelsus “We see that the internal character of a man is often expressed in his exterior appearance, even in the manner of his walking, and in the sound of his voice. Likewise, the hidden character of things is to a certain extent expressed in their outward forms.

R.H. True, a plant physiologist and historian, succinctly explained the doctrine: “... every plant having useful medicinal properties bears somewhere about it the likeness of the organ or of the part of the body upon which it exerts a healing action.

Views of stalwarts: The Doctrine of signature has been used by many stalwarts in search of the drug substances. – **Dr. von Grauvougl**

Digitalis must be used in blood dyscrasia because its flowers are adorned with blood coloured dot.

Euphrasia (Eyebright) was famous, from ancient times, as a medicine for the eyes – because it had a black spot in its corolla which looked like a pupil. – **Dr. William**

Boericke

Hypericum, having red juice, ought, therefore, to be use in hemorrhage.

Euphorbia, having a milky juice, must be good for increasing the flow of milk.

Sticta, having some likeness to the lungs, was called pulmonaria (Lung wort) – and esteemed as a remedy for pulmonary complaints.

The **lungs of a fox** must be specific against asthma because this animal has a very vigorous respiration.

Dr. J. H. Clarke - In the introduction of the remedy Magnesia Carbonica, wrote that it is often found that the physical characteristics of the substances correspond with their dynamic influences. The second reference supporting the doctrine of signature in the Clark’s Materia Medica will be found in the introduction of Magnesia Phosphorica, where he mentioned that there are other means besides proving of finding the keynote symptoms of remedies.

Many other stalwarts like **Dr. C Hering, Dr. C.M. Boger, Dr H.A.Roberts and Dr.J.C.Burnett** had supporting attitude towards this doctrine.

Master Hahnemann was strongly against this concept because of his aversion to all sorts of speculations. In the **footnote of aphorism 108**, he says, “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 effect in deranging the health of the man, in order to learn what morbid state each medicine is capable of curing, except the great and immortal Albrecht Von Haller.”

In the **110th aphorism Master Hahnemann** says,“.....and that the only possible way to ascertain their medicinal powers is to observe those changes of health medicines are capable of producing in the healthy organism; for the pure, peculiar powers of medicines available for the cure of disease are to be learned neither by any ingenious a priori speculations, nor by the smell, taste or appearance of the drugs, nor by their chemical analysis, nor yet by the employment of several of them at one time

in a mixture (prescription) in diseases;.....”.

The doctrine of signature can be observed from the general therapeutic study of a drug. Some examples of doctrine of signatures among Homoeopathic drugs:

Belladonna plant grows in calcium rich soil. Belladonna is the acute and complementary to Calcarea carbonate.

Blatta orientalis – Lives in cracks, crevices, damp places– Useful for asthma of people living in damp basements and cellars.

Bryonia alba is prepared from the root. The roots are fleshy, bitter in taste with nauseating smell, very rough, acidic and yellowish-white in colour. Similarly, the Bryonia patient is somewhat fleshy, with bitter taste in mouth, yellow-white coated tongue and all the discharges are acrid.

Calcarea carb– Hard shell to protect the soft body– Patient is soft and needs protection

Chelidonium– Yellow juice– Useful for jaundice.

Digitalis– Blood colored dots on petals– Given for disorders of blood vessels.

Euphrasia– Black spot in corolla looks like a pupil– Useful for eye complaints.

Gelsemium -Drug prepared from the yellow flowers of – acts well in jaundice.

Hypericum– Has red juice– Used in haemorrhages.

Lachesis mutus is prepared from the deadly poison of Surukuku snake of South America. It remains curled in the winter and wakes up in the spring. It passes very offensive, black stool. It always protrudes its bifurcated tongue – which trembles. Similarly, Lachesis patients cannot tolerate tight bandaging / clothing; protrudes tongue all the time – with a bifurcated black streak in the middle; symptoms go from below-upwards; stool hard, black & foul smelling.

Pulsatilla– Movement of flowers– Changeability of pulsatilla patient.

Sanguinaria– Red colour– Useful for bleeding

Tarentula Hispania is prepared from the Spanish spider that is sensitive to drum beats – similarly, the patient is over-sensitive to music.

Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach (German philosopher and anthropologist) wrote: “Der mensch ist was er ißt”- that translates into

English as ‘man is what he eats. Many foods can be considered as nature’s amazing pharmacy.

Some of these foods and their correspondences are as follows:

Carrots: A sliced carrot looks like the human eye. The pupil, iris and radiating lines look just like the human eye; and science now shows that carrots greatly enhance blood flow and function of the eyes.

Celery: Celery look just like bones. This food specifically target bone strength. Bones are 23% sodium and these foods are 23% Sodium.

Citrus fruits: Grapes, oranges and other Citrus fruits look just like the mammary glands of the female and actually assist the health of the breasts and the movement of lymph in and out of the breasts.

Grapes: Many grapes hang in a cluster that has the shape of the heart. Each grape looks like a blood cell and all of the research today shows that grapes are also profound heart and blood vitalizing food.

Kidney beans: Kidney beans actually help maintain kidney function and they look exactly like the human kidneys.

Olives: Olives assist the health and function of the ovaries.

Onions: Onions look like body cells. Today’s research shows that onions help clear waste materials from all of the body cells. They even produce tears which wash the epithelial layers of the eyes.

Peanuts: Peanuts (containing Arginine) have a profound effect on the testicles and sexual libido.

Sweet potatoes: sweet potatoes look like the pancreas and actually balance the glycaemic index of diabetics.

Tomatoes: A tomato has four chambers and is red. The heart is red and has four chambers. Research show that tomatoes are indeed good food for heart and blood functions.

Walnuts: A walnut looks like a little Brain, a Left & Right Hemisphere, Upper Cerebrums & Lower Cerebellums. Even the wrinkles or folds are on the nut just like the Neo-cortex. We now know that walnuts help develop over 3 dozen neuro-transmitters for brain function. In the 17th Century, the

Botanists & herbalist, William Edward Coles (1626 – 1662), the author of the art of sampling and Adam in Eden, stated that “Walnuts were good for curing head ailments because they have the perfect signatures for the head.”

The basic principle of doctrine of signatures is that all creatures are correlated to each other. Based on these associations, they form inner systems of relationships independent of biological taxa. Analogies between creatures in nature and human beings exist in form, color, smell, but also in humoral, pathological and astrological aspects.

Conclusion

The Doctrine of Signatures may sound eccentric, but its insight is primeval and rediscovered in contemporary times. Concepts similar to the Doctrine of Signatures may be found in folk or indigenous medicines and in modern alternative medicines. The doctrine of signatures is described as attributions and mnemonics of value only in creating a system for remembering actions attributed to medical herbs. However, till now there is no scientific evidence that shapes and colors help in the discovery of medical uses of plants or animals. An understanding of the role of the active principle of a homeopathic medicine, in the physiology of its source, may aid in understanding a curative action.

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