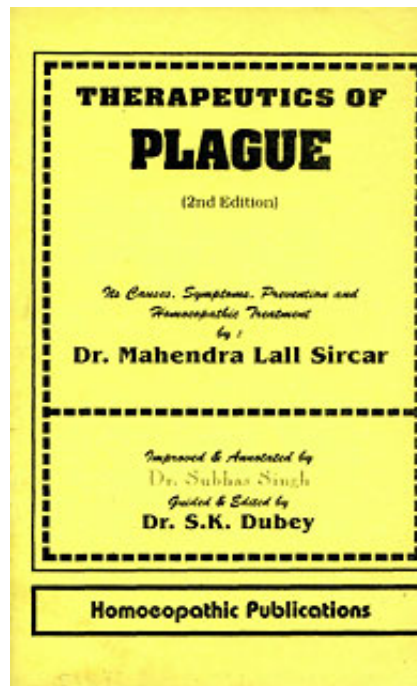


Mahendra Lall Sircar Therapeutics of Plague

Reading excerpt

[Therapeutics of Plague](#)
of [Mahendra Lall Sircar](#)

Publisher: Homoeopathic Publications-Dr. Singh



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INTRODUCTION:

Plague is not only a pathological name but also conveys an aura with it of a kind of dead calm, a sickly, putrid sense of degeneration. Plague, the word itself has become a symbol of horrors of death. When plague strikes death paces calmly and silently in the filthy and deserted streets but the echoes of death can be heard long after the disease has passed over the area. While other diseases cause fear it strikes terror. There is no protection from plague. It affects all without any difference to caste and creed, rich or poor. Death does not discriminate. Plague does seldom. Plague is an individual and community disease. It is a physical, spiritual, social and a political problem.

Plague has always become a cause of widespread panic whenever cases of plague are reported. Greater and faster media of today's communication give wings to the fear, panic and worst of all rumour.

Similar was the effect when Dr. R.G. Viegas¹ a physician and a member of the Bombay Municipal Standing Committee, drew the attention of the house to the cases of Bubonic plague in the Mandvi section of the Port Trust Estate. His announcement on 24th September 1896 was like dropping a bombshell on the floor of the city hall. Plague had attacked young people mostly and the ensuing fear was so great that many had abandoned their homes. This helped a lot in spreading the disease. Word-of-mouth accounts converted into horror stories. In one week only, 10,000 persons fled Bombay. It is estimated that at the time of the greatest alarm, out of the normal population of 900,000 there were not more than 400,000 people left in the place.

As the disease could not be checked an SOS was sent to Dr. Waldemar Mordecai Wolff Haffkine in Calcutta (where he was working on Cholera) Dr. Haffkine, who was already working on the history of plague bacillus, came immediately to Bombay (he arrived in Bombay on October 7th 1896), when Govt. of India commissioned him to investigate the Bombay epidemic. It was in the Petit Laboratory of the Grant Medical College with a meagre staff of a clerk and three peons that Dr. Haffkine invented plague vaccine and on January 10th 1897 tested the vaccine on himself.

1. Dr. A. G. Viegas, worked tirelessly, day and night during the epidemic of Plague in Bombay. As a gesture of respect, his statue was erected at Dhobi Talao, Bombay and it is still there—a mark of gratitude of a grateful nation.

Soon news of his invention spread to the world and scientists from all over the world poured in to Bombay to witness the efficacy of Dr. Haffkine's techniques. A German delegation also came and was headed by none other than famous Dr. Robert Koch who was later awarded Nobel Prize in medicine. Dr. Koch was so impressed by Dr. Haffkine's work that he stayed for a year in Bombay, assessing, evaluating and encouraging the younger man's work. Though the epidemic was checked at that time but Plague has not vanished from the face of earth unlike Smallpox for example. There has been a gradual increase since 1960 with a recent resurgence (1972-1975) in various continent. World wide there were a total of 2737 cases reported in 1974 (including eight in US) with 164 deaths, in 1977 there were 18 reported cases in US.

There were a lot of vibrations when the first case of plague was reported in the Seed district of Maharashtra this year. Things were being sorted out but at a leisurely pace. When the news of death in Surat (Gujrat) due to Pneumonic Plague was flashed in newspapers, television and radio bulletins, people were struck with terror. Panic and anxiety spread like jungle fire. There were much hectic activities in all corners. Government officials started running from posts to pillars and to post again. Plague as a medical subject had lost its importance in the decades gone by. It was of only an academic matter in medical classes. Current books were opened to find that plague has not been discussed properly. (Even the latest and standard book did not offer much on the subject. In the ensuing fears some physicians and surgeons of Surat pulled down the shutters of their clinics and moved away to safer places. The Epidemic Disease Act was evoked by Maharashtra Government to make it mandatory for the persons from Plague affected Surat to undergo medical check up while entering Maharashtra and it will be binding on the medical practitioners to inform the government about the cases of plague treated by them. It was in this atmosphere of confusion that Tetracycline came as a rescue (soon to be proved the worst of iatrogenic curses). Unbelievable amounts of Tetracycline (which has its own quota of life endangering side effects) were poured in the infected areas. Suffering and terror stricken masses were given large doses of tetracycline for curative as well as prophylactic purpose. People at large, once they knew the name of medicine started gulping

tetracycline religiously with the hope that this will save them from plague. Repeated warnings from the Health Departments about the inefficiency of Tetracycline as a preventive was overlooked and ignored.

Large quantities of flntiplague vaccine ujere distributed by the Government. It is to be noted that the Haffkine Bio-Pharmaceutical Corporation Limited is the only manufacturer of this vaccine in Inida (This vaccine was first developed in India by Dr. ULJ.M. Haffkine in 1897). lilhen they could not cope with the demand, a large contingency of flnti-Plague Vaccine aias imported from Russia especially for immunising doctors, health workers, police and army men working in plague affected area. Though the need for development of vaccine based on recent cultures and not one on existing since 1950.

The role of homoeopathy, as a medical science, at this time of national crisis, panic and confusion was not one of demanding respect. Homoeopathy has made its respectable place because of its miraculous curative and preventive action in the previous epidemics of plague, cholera, typhoid and scarlet fever. But the silence of the profession in thsis emergency was pathetic.

The only noteworthy and authenitic work in this field was done under the guidance of Dr. flrun Bhasme, Principal Sonajirao Kshirsagar Homoeopathic Medical College and Hospital. He conducted a thorough survey of the Beed town, its suburbs and neighbouring villages with the help of his undergraduate and post graduate students. Cases (of confirmed cases of plague) were taken and case histories recorded by three Post graduate students. Dr. Tambe Shausaheb J, Dr. flrindam Dutta and this presnet writer, Dr. Subhas Singh, under the guidance and strict vigilance of Dr. P. LUadgaonkar, Vice Principal and Dr. Rrun Bhasme, Principal of S.J.K. Homoeopathic Medical College, Seed. Later, on the basis of these case-histories. Genus C-pidemicus² was found which was distributed free of cost from the outdoor section of the hospital of the institution, I must say this without fear of being blamed for being biased or self propagating that this was the

2. Anyone having any queries whatsoever or interested in the details of the above mentioned work may write to:

Plague Research Committee
C/o. Dr. Arun Bhasme, Principal
Sonajirao Kshirsagar Homoeopathic Medical College
Beed-431 192. (M.S.)

only practical oriented and on-field work done by homoeopaths in Surat or Seed or any place where epidemic of Plague had cast its deathly shadow.

UJе all felt the necessity of a help book from which to start.

It was during my work on Plague that I came across, this piece of work done by Dr. Mahendra Lall Sircar. The book though old but invaluable. Initially I intended to have it reprinted as it was. But then I found that at some places informations were somewhat out-dated. So, I had to dare to do some editing and furnish some newer informations on the subject. But, I have printed the original book as it was, keeping in mind its historical importance. Whatever additions or editions have been done, has been done in the form of **Footnote** and in a separate section of the book included as the "**Addenda**" in the last part of the book.

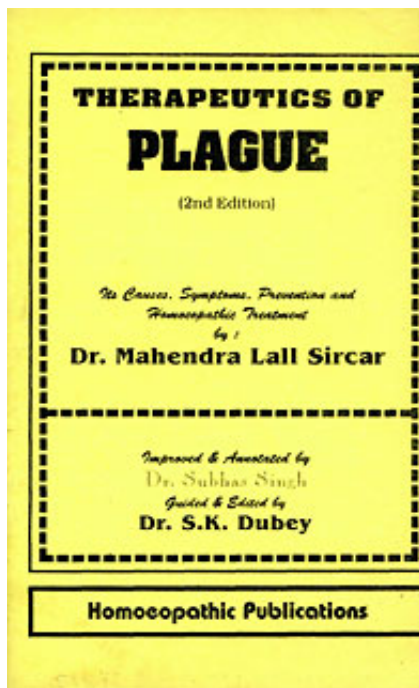
If this book could be of any little help to the physicians, teachers and students it would then serve its purpose. I only wanted our fraternity to know that homoeopathy had been and what are its uses and successes in epidemics of Plague. This book will surely give us more confidence when treating cases of plague or God forbid, another epidemic of plague.

Though no comments or suggestions are expected on the part written by Dr. Sircar but I will sincerely be encouraged to be corrected where ever there is any error. I do anticipate and request suggestions and corrections which will be accommodated in the coming editions of which if worth, I am afraid, may be more than one.

Long live Homoeopathy.

Beed
18.9.94

Subhas Singh



Mahendra Lal Sircar

[Therapeutics of Plague](#)

72 pages, booklet
publication 1994



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