

Editorial for the month of October 2011

Disorders of the throat and homoeopathy

Disorders of the throat are extremely common in day to day practice. The commonest throat disorder that I come across in my daily practice is viral infection of the throat but the other causes includes allergies, bacterial infection especially streptococcal infection, gastric reflux, tonsillitis, pharyngitis and cancers related to pharynx and tonsils etc. Most throat problems go away on its own because they are usually minor; treatment is only needed when there is a persistent throat problem.

I will be discussing few cases of throat disorder; Let me start with a very interesting case that I have cured some years back. It was a case of an advocate who was referred to me by a neurologist who was 55 years old. He complained of severe pain in his throat on attempting to drink, on attempting to swallow and on attempting to talk. The pain was quite deep seated and annoying. The character of the pain was burning or as if raw, sometimes also there was soreness. It was more persisting on the right side and hardly on the left side. It would aggravate more in the afternoon and in the late night.

He consulted his general practitioner who diagnosed this situation first as an allergy, later on as an infection and when ultimately he could not help the patient he referred him to an ENT surgeon who also started with the similar diagnosis but when nothing happened he was referred to a very senior most neurologist in Bombay who diagnosed him as a case of glosso-pharyngeal neuralgia. He also complained of pain at the root of the tongue and near the sides of the tongue. He complained of roughness in the oral cavity. He was explained that this diagnosis has no treatment only painkillers with tranquillizer may help. He also complained of pain in the throat when

coughing the burning pain deep in the throat was making him frustrated each day.

His general condition was quite normal except that in the past he had a history of recurrent laryngitis where his voice cracked when he overuses his voice or eats sour pickle. He coughs due to the tickling sensation in the throat. He had multiple corns on his fingers in the past which he got cauterized but they still keep on coming, of course with less intensity.

He has a strong desire for cold drinks and cold water. Basically he is a hot patient. He is in a habit of biting his nails when anxious or busy reading, some exciting news or trying to concentrate on a subject. Otherwise he is mentally quite stable.

Knowing this kind of information, his stable personality and his success as an advocate I prescribed him Lycopodium. I started with 30C, went up to 200C but unfortunately the patient could not get any relief and then I had to look the case from very different angle.

His concomitant of recurrent suppression of corns with cautery, his recurrent hoarseness of voice on attempting to overuse the voice, and his predominant burning sensation in the throat led me think of very simple remedy Arum triphyllum.

I started with Arum triphyllum 30C and to my surprise he said that his irritation in the throat was less by 15 to 20 % within the first few weeks of homoeopathic treatment. Subsequently in the next three and a half months repeating Arum triphyllum 3 to 4 times a week totally removed his pain and discomfort in swallowing along with the corns which was persisting on his fingers.

Arum triphyllum in my practice is a very useful remedy; we call it as an Indian turnip. It comes from Araceae family, and it's a very useful remedy for the disorders of the throat like sore, raw and burning. Sensation with acrid discharges, the voice is changeable; Arum is useful for people who talk a lot like advocate, doctors, lawyers, clergymen, salesman etc. Biting the finger nails is a very important concomitant, desire for cold drink, cold food, and cold water like phosphorus and thirst for small quantity are the most peculiar indication of this remedy.

Another case which I would like to discuss with you is case of a Wallenberg Syndrome also known as Lateral Medullary Syndrome; it's a very rare syndrome. The most important causative factor of this syndrome is cerebrovascular accident like cerebral thrombosis, cerebral haemorrhage, and cerebral embolism. It usually occurs in a middle aged person where the presenting features are basically of dysphagia. The person is unable to swallow food comfortably liquid as well as solid. Sometimes it is accompanied by diplopia; numbness or neuralgia on one side of the face, ipsilateral horner syndrome, slurred speech, vertigo and symptoms of cerebellar ataxia characterised by incoordination of the lower limbs. Sometimes damage to the trigeminal nerve nucleus can produce severe trigeminal nerve neuralgia. Depending on the extent of the damage the Wallenberg Syndrome can persist for few weeks to few months to few years.

I had a similar case who was an architect in United States and he received news about his friend who was diagnosed as a terminal case of cancer of the stomach. He was in United States for his official work to submit a plan regarding building a bridge in United States when he receives this news. This created a big shock and also excitement and produced lot of anxieties in him that one day he can be also diagnosed with the cancer and there is no guarantee for the life. This

remained in his mind for some time and later on when he returned to India after few months this episode was forgotten and then one day when he was reading the newspaper he suddenly developed slurred speech with diplopia, his general practitioner was called who measured his blood pressure, pulse and examined him and diagnosed him as a case of a stroke. Later when he was shifted to hospital and CT scan is taken he was diagnosed that he had definitely a stroke near the lateral aspect of medulla oblongata of brain resulting in ischemia and necrosis.

He was put on steroids, manitol, blood thinners and other antihypertensive drugs as a preventive measure for palliative purpose. The recovery was there but slow and hence the case was referred to me in Bombay Hospital.

When I examined the patient I took following symptoms: Ailment from bad news; anxiety with fear; fear of failure because this person was extremely eminent architect in India and he always feared about his reputation, his work and his position in the society; he manytimes felt that when he over exerted his memory failed; his vertigo was worse from any motion; there was numbness on one side of the face; swallowing was difficult; there was constipation for a soft stool; With this combination of symptoms I prescribed him a remedy Gelsemium.

Gelsemium is one of the important remedy for neurological conditions resulting from fear, fright or bad news, in the given case the most peculiar symptoms were - soft stool that constipates, fear of failure, anxiety with fear, ailments from bad news and the typical vertigo with numbness of the face.

Gelsemium 30C three times a day for 9 weeks helped him to come out of this syndrome very fast and in a spell of 6 months there were no trace of his Lateral Medullary Syndrome.

Gelsemium as you know comes from Loganiaceae family, emotions like fear, fright; emotion, sudden surprise, excitement, bad news and shock are very important causative factors. Emotionally they are quite apprehensive and timid. They lack will power mental as well as physical and manytimes they have a fear of losing self control. They are quite focussed people and hence they have quite disposition and are averse to be disturbed. They are generally thirstless but they are hot, they need lot of open air, they are worse from heat of sun. The thing that they love the most is stimulant like an alcohol or like a tonic which usually ameliorates them.