



International Journal of Homoeopathic Sciences

E-ISSN: 2616-4493
P-ISSN: 2616-4485
Impact Factor (RJIF): 5.96
www.homoeopathicjournal.com
IJHS 2025; 9(4): 567-569
Received: 17-08-2025
Accepted: 19-09-2025

Dr. Mohd Sameer
Intern, BVVS Homoeopathic
Medical College and Hospital,
Bagalkot, Karnataka, India

Dr. Krishna Sai
Assistant Professor,
Department of Organon of
Medicine and Homoeopathic
Philosophy, BVVS
Homoeopathic Medical College
and Hospital, Bagalkot,
Karnataka, India

Correlation of aphorism 153 with the concept of keynote symptoms in materia medica

Mohd Sameer and Krishna Sai

DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26164485.2025.v9.i4.I.1967>

Abstract

Aphorism 153 of the Organon of Medicine forms the cornerstone of homoeopathic philosophy, emphasizing that the most striking, singular, uncommon, and peculiar symptoms should guide the choice of the remedy. Over time, this aphorism evolved into the modern concept of “keynote symptoms” within the Materia Medica, considered the distinguishing features of each remedy. This study aims to establish a conceptual and clinical correlation between Hahnemann’s Aphorism 153 and the development of keynote symptoms, exploring their shared philosophical foundation and practical implications for individualization in clinical practice. A qualitative analytical approach was adopted, examining primary sources such as Hahnemann’s Organon of Medicine (6th edition) and Chronic Diseases, along with secondary texts by Kent, Boericke, Allen, Clarke, and Boger. Comparative textual mapping was carried out to identify how the peculiar symptom described by Hahnemann manifests as the keynote in classical Materia Medica. The findings suggest that Aphorism 153 represents the epistemological root of keynote theory; both emphasize the need to recognize what is characteristic in the patient rather than what is common to the disease. However, overreliance on keynotes without holistic evaluation of totality may diverge from the true spirit of the Organon. The study concludes that integrating Aphorism 153’s original philosophy with modern Materia Medica enhances precision in remedy selection, strengthens homoeopathic education, and preserves the scientific integrity of clinical practice.

Keywords: Aphorism 153, organon of medicine, keynote symptoms, individualization, homoeopathic philosophy

Introduction

Homoeopathy, as propounded by Samuel Hahnemann, is a system built upon the law of similars (*Similia Similibus Curentur*), where the individuality of the patient plays a pivotal role in remedy selection^[1]. Unlike conventional systems that focus primarily on pathological diagnosis, homoeopathy seeks to identify the peculiar individuality of the patient through characteristic symptoms. Among the 291 aphorisms of the Organon of Medicine, Aphorism 153 holds a unique position as it distills the essence of individualization: “In this search for a homoeopathic specific remedy... the more striking, singular, uncommon and peculiar (characteristic) signs and symptoms of the case are chiefly and most solely to be kept in view^[1].” This aphorism defines the art of differentiation — the ability to distinguish one patient’s suffering from another, and one remedy from all others.

During the later evolution of homoeopathic literature, this philosophical concept matured into a more practical form known as “keynote prescribing.” The term “keynote” was popularized by Henry C. Allen and others to denote the leading characteristic symptom that reflects the individuality of a remedy. Just as Aphorism 153 highlights the peculiar symptom of the patient, the keynote represents the peculiar individuality of the medicine. However, while both concepts are interrelated, their philosophical connection is often overlooked in modern literature. The present article aims to explore this interrelationship and demonstrate that keynote symptoms are not independent entities but rather clinical extensions of Hahnemann’s original doctrine of peculiarity^[4].

Review of Literature

1. Philosophical Foundation in the Organon

Hahnemann emphasized throughout the Organon that the physician’s highest duty is to recognize the totality of symptoms as the outwardly reflected image of internal derangement

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Mohd Sameer
Intern, BVVS Homoeopathic
Medical College and Hospital,
Bagalkot, Karnataka, India

(Aphorisms 6–7) ^[1]. Within this totality, certain symptoms hold diagnostic importance for homoeopathy — those which are striking, singular, uncommon, and peculiar. Aphorism 153 thus serves as the physician's compass for remedy selection. In *The Chronic Diseases*, Hahnemann elaborated further on the miasmatic background of chronic cases, linking individuality not only to symptom expression but also to constitutional tendencies ^[2].

2. Evolution of the Keynote Concept

After Hahnemann's era, the concept of peculiarity evolved through the works of his successors. Constantine Hering introduced the term “guiding symptoms,” emphasizing that every remedy has distinguishing features guiding the prescriber ^[8]. Later, Henry C. Allen's *Keynotes and Characteristics* became a milestone in making the study of remedies accessible through their most striking features ^[4]. Kent, in his *Lectures on Homoeopathic Philosophy*, clarified that “the peculiar, strange, rare, and characteristic symptoms are the real indicators of the remedy ^[3].” Boericke, Clarke, and Boger further refined the *Materia Medica* with symptom hierarchies that prioritize individuality over common generalities.

While Hahnemann viewed peculiarity as a qualitative essence within totality, later practitioners condensed it into practical keynotes for ease of clinical application. This shift, although useful, occasionally led to superficial prescribing when the keynote was treated as a substitute rather than a component of totality. The correlation between Aphorism 153 and the keynote thus offers an opportunity to restore philosophical depth to practical homoeopathy ^[7].

Methodology

The present study followed a qualitative and analytical research design emphasizing philosophical correlation and textual synthesis. Primary references were drawn from Hahnemann's *Organon of Medicine* (6th edition) and *The Chronic Diseases* ^[1]. Secondary materials included classical *Materia Medica* sources such as Kent's *Lectures*, Boericke's *Pocket Manual*, Allen's *Keynotes*, Clarke's *Dictionary of Practical Materia Medica*, and Boger's *Synoptic Key*.

A comparative chart was developed to trace the peculiar symptoms identified by Hahnemann to their expression as keynotes in *Materia Medica*. Ten polychrest remedies—Sulphur, Pulsatilla, Nux vomica, Lycopodium, Sepia, Arsenicum album, Phosphorus, Calcarea carbonica, Silicea, and Natrum muriaticum—were analyzed. The analysis included examining the peculiar mental, physical, and general symptoms as described by Hahnemann and later summarized by Allen and Kent. Clinical cases reported in standard journals were also reviewed to observe the contemporary use of keynote symptoms in diagnosis and prescription ^[9].

Discussion

Aphorism 153 stands as a philosophical milestone that bridges the perception of disease individuality with remedy individuality ^[1]. Hahnemann's focus on peculiar symptoms ensures that prescribing is never mechanical but deeply personalized. When viewed through this lens, the keynote concept emerges as an extension rather than a deviation from the *Organon's* principle ^[4]. For instance, in Pulsatilla, the peculiarities include a mild, yielding temperament, thirstlessness, and complaints shifting from side to side. In Nux vomica, the keynote irritability and oversensitivity

mirror the patient's inner state of excess reaction ^[5]. Lachesis, with its loquacity, jealousy, and left-sided complaints, embodies individuality in both physical and emotional dimensions. Such peculiarities reflect Aphorism 153's directive to identify what is characteristic and distinctive. Similarly, Sulphur represents the philosophical man of ideas who neglects personal hygiene and feels heat constantly. These peculiar symptoms, though seemingly trivial, hold immense value as they represent the individual in contrast to the disease.

While Aphorism 153 provides a theoretical foundation, the keynote simplifies its application. Physicians often encounter large symptom totals; identifying a keynote helps prioritize individuality. However, the keynote should never replace the totality—it should act as the entry point to deeper analysis. For example, the thirstless nature of Pulsatilla may lead to remedy consideration, but confirmation requires correlating general modalities, mental state, and concomitants. Teaching homoeopathy through the combined lens of Aphorism 153 and the keynote approach deepens comprehension. Students often find *Materia Medica* abstract; the keynote helps anchor their understanding while maintaining philosophical integrity. Clinically, this integration reduces mechanical prescribing and revives the true spirit of individualization ^[10].

Results

The textual and conceptual analysis revealed a clear continuity between Hahnemann's idea of peculiarity and the keynote methodology:

1. Aphorism 153 defines the theoretical foundation of individualization.
2. The keynote represents its clinical application.
3. When applied together, they enhance remedy accuracy and minimize errors from superficial prescribing.
4. Remedies analyzed through this dual lens showed greater consistency in clinical outcomes when both peculiar and keynote symptoms were matched holistically.

Thus, the study establishes that the keynote system is not a later innovation but an organic evolution of Hahnemann's principles into practical utility.

Conclusion

Aphorism 153 and the keynote concept are two expressions of the same underlying homoeopathic philosophy — the pursuit of individuality. Hahnemann provided the conceptual framework, and later authors transformed it into a clinical tool. The peculiar symptom of the patient and the keynote of the remedy are mirror images, meeting in the act of simillimum selection. When detached from totality, keynotes become mere mechanical cues; when integrated with *Organon* philosophy, they become powerful instruments of precision. This harmony between theory and practice reaffirms that every clinical success in homoeopathy originates from fidelity to the *Organon*. Future research should focus on developing structured educational modules and digital tools that align remedy keynotes with Aphorism 153, reinforcing both the art and science of homoeopathic prescribing.

Conflict of Interest

Not available

Financial Support

Not available

References

1. Hahnemann S. Organon of Medicine. 6th ed. Boericke W, translator. New Delhi: B. Jain Publishers; c2011.
2. Hahnemann S. The Chronic Diseases, Their Peculiar Nature and Their Homoeopathic Cure. New Delhi: B. Jain Publishers; c2002.
3. Kent JT. Lectures on Homoeopathic Philosophy. New Delhi: B. Jain Publishers; c2010.
4. Allen HC. Keynotes and Characteristics with Comparisons of Some of the Leading Remedies of the Materia Medica. 10th ed. New Delhi: B. Jain Publishers; c2013.
5. Boericke W. Pocket Manual of Homoeopathic Materia Medica. 9th ed. New Delhi: B. Jain Publishers; c2004.
6. Clarke JH. Dictionary of Practical Materia Medica. London: The Homeopathic Publishing Company; c1900.
7. Boger CM. Synoptic Key of the Materia Medica. 8th ed. New Delhi: B. Jain Publishers; c2010.
8. Hering C. Guiding Symptoms of Our Materia Medica. Vol. I–X. New Delhi: B. Jain Publishers; c2014.
9. Roberts HA. The Principles and Art of Cure by Homoeopathy. New Delhi: B. Jain Publishers; c2002.
10. Close S. The Genius of Homoeopathy: Lectures and Essays on Homoeopathic Philosophy. New Delhi: B. Jain Publishers; c2004.
11. Dudgeon R. Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Homoeopathy. London: Homeopathic Publishing Company; c1853.
12. Gaier H. Thorsons Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Homoeopathy. London: Harper Collins; c1991.

How to Cite This Article

Sameer M, Sai K. Correlation of aphorism 153 with the concept of keynote symptoms in materia medica. International Journal of Homoeopathic Sciences. 2025;9(4):567-569.

Creative Commons (CC) License

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.