



Ignatia

Keith Souter profiles
the remedy of loss

Most home homoeopathic kits will have Ignatia in them, listing it as a bereavement or shock and disappointment remedy. Its use in such situations may well have converted people to homeopathy, yet it has far wider use than that. To see the wonder of this remedy's healing action you need to understand the unique way that the individual in need of Ignatia reacts to illness or stress.

I like to think of remedy vignettes, character studies or tales that illustrate the features of a remedy. In the willow-pattern we get a pretty good idea of many of the features that indicate when Ignatia would be helpful.

The tale of two lovers

Everyone must surely have seen the world famous willow-pattern, which has been in continuous pottery and china production since it was first designed by Thomas Minton in 1799. The blue and white landscape was subsequently popularised by Josiah Spode at his Staffordshire pottery, from whence it found its way around the world, being produced by many other famous potteries and companies. There is some debate as to whether the

story behind the scene is originally Chinese or merely an English invention yet, whichever is the truth, the fact is that it is a scene which is *romantic*, mysterious and evocative of the East. It is *exotic*.

The willow-pattern portrays the tale of Koong-Shee, the daughter of a wealthy mandarin, and Chang, his secretary. Koong-Shee has been promised to Ta-Jin, a wealthy warrior nobleman, but it is Chang with whom she falls in *love*. Inflamed with fury, the mandarin forbids her to see Chang and banishes him, at the same time locking Koong-Shee in his pagoda until the day of the wedding.

The lovers are overcome by *desolation* and are *heartbroken* at their *loss*. They *yearn* for each other. Koong-Shee alternates between pacing the pagoda and just *sitting, sighing* and *sobbing*. Her maids *cannot console her* and she is unpredictable and subject to *mood swings*. She would laugh with them or snap at them, and she would have fits of *jealousy* and *suspicion*, asking them to reassure her that Chang was not seeing someone else and that he would still love her. At times she would get so tense that she *trembled*, and at times

she might develop twitches, so that the servants would worry lest she have a *fit*.

She wanted only Chang, just as he wanted her.

The two contrive to communicate by sending messages to each other by pigeon. On the night before the wedding Chang sneaks into the orchard and they plan to elope. Unfortunately, they are discovered by the mandarin, who chases them across a small bridge from the pagoda. A passing boat takes them to an island where they take refuge in a small house. Over the years the mandarin becomes consumed with anger that his daughter has run away, and jealous beyond measure because Koong-Shee has loved Chang more than he, her father. In time, he and Ta-Jin, the spurned suitor, track the two lovers down and set the house on fire, with the lovers inside. But the gods take pity on the two lovers and the next day their spirits rise, phoenix-like as two love birds who fly into the realm of everlasting happiness.

If you look at the willow-pattern you will see all of these elements, and they symbolise to me, in the character of Koong-Shee, and also in Chang, the profile of Ignatia, some of whose features I have italicised.

The remedy

Ignatia comes from the St Ignatius bean, which is the seed of *Ignatia amaris*, a climbing shrub native to China, the Philippines and Indonesia. It was taken to Europe by the Jesuits in the 1650s and named after the founder of their order, Ignatius Loyola. The seeds were used to treat epilepsy and some contagious diseases, such as cholera.

It belongs to the family Loganiaceae, which also

Nux vomica.

It was proved by Samuel Hahnemann himself, who compared the reactions of *Nux vomica* with it. He felt that while it was similar in many ways, yet it “was not appropriate for those who experienced anger or violence, but that it would do service to anyone who reacted with rapid changes of mood from gaiety to weepiness, and who internalised and dwelt upon their loss.”

offended, easily hurt. They may sleep fitfully and badly.

They may manifest sensitivity to the environment, with aversion to cigarette smoke and stuffy atmospheres. Noises and bright lights will make some symptoms worse, and they will be eased by rest away from the noise or light.

At a physical level there is a general hypersensitivity. Thus there may be the development of twitches, tics, cramps and spasms. These spasms may manifest as a lump in the throat, spasm in the throat or difficulty swallowing, even amounting to the nervous state that we refer to as

globus hystericus, whereby

the individual cannot swallow food. There could be a cough that feels tight and as if there is a constricting feeling in the airways.

Acute back pain could flare up suddenly. Irritable bowel syndrome may develop, and it is common to experience rectal symptoms. Burning, cutting feelings, like a hot poker or a knife in the rectum, or even like a ball in the back passage may come on and seem almost impossible to live with.

There is almost always a delicate and chilly tendency. Most complaints will be worse in the cold, but will improve from sun and warmth.

Curiously, pains tend to occur in very circumscribed or well-located spots. For example headaches will be sudden and severe and feel as if a nail has been hammered into a spot, or a single part of a muscle or



Courtesy of Wedgewood

produces the remedies *Nux vomica*, *Gelsemium* and *Spigelia*. The fruit of *Ignatia amaris* is a corticated berry, about ten cms in diameter, which contains numerous seeds in the middle of its yellow pulp. It has a high alkaloid content, more than 60 per cent consisting of strychnine, which is about twice as much as is found in

Romantic and sensitive

Romance and idealism are common characteristics of the *Ignatia* state. There may be a general tendency to see the world and relationships through rose-tinted glasses. As a result, when things go wrong and they are disappointed in something they take it personally. They are sensitive and easily

joint will hurt.

You can see the romantic background in the willow-pattern and the tendency to sensitivity in Koong-Shee.

Loss and yearning

The word loss almost underpins the Ignatia reaction, because they do not cope well with loss. This can be loss of anything important, such as status, a treasured possession, or something they have become attached to. The most devastating loss, however, is the loss of a loved one, be that a relative, friend, pet or lover. This will fill them with desolation. They will be aware of the empty hole that is created in their life and they may feel empty inside. They will feel genuinely heartbroken.

Ignatia may be needed when grief is prolonged, or when ailments start following a bereavement, a relationship breakdown, or some other important loss. They get love-sick. They can also feel upset if they feel that they have failed someone, as if they have failed in their duty. They will dwell on this and agonise about it.

They are prone to jealousy, which can become so severe that it will rise all of a sudden to ruin their equanimity. It can create turbulence in an affair or relationship.

In the typical Ignatia reaction there is a tendency to yearn for the thing that is lost. The person will not often talk about their loss or about how they are feeling, but they will agonise and yearn for the lost person or thing. They will not tell people about it, but they will in a way expect them to know.

Again, you can see the essence of Ignatia in the willow-pattern: a thwarted love affair, the overwhelming

sense of loss and the tendency to produce twitches and spasms of one sort or another. A further analogy with the willow-pattern is the tendency to feel blue, so blue that the whole of life is blue and desolate, lacking in colour. There is a tendency to brood and to seem to wallow in their blues.

Sitting, sobbing and sighing

The Ignatia reaction characteristically shows the three “S” symptoms. They sit around because they cannot motivate themselves; they sob and they sigh. They say to themselves that there is no point, that it is “so unfair” and they despair. Their sighing is uncontrollable and is apparent to friends and family.

Paradoxical reactions

Many books talk about Ignatia being indicated for hysteria. Well, it is and it isn't. It may seem as if the person is out of control, but it is in fact the rapid change, the mood swings that account for the so-called hysterical reaction. The individual may react to news with laughter, making a joke of the situation and then, almost instantly, they would change and dissolve into tears. The unpredictability and changeability can be so severe as to make them seem rude, or quarrelsome. Yet they are not violent or physical.

People being sympathetic will tend to make them feel worse, as would being engaged in conversation. Indeed, James Tyler Kent said that sometimes “there is nothing you can say that will please” the Ignatia person.

Their reactions to physical symptoms would also tend to be paradoxical, or unusual. For example an inflamed

joint might be better for pressure, or a sore throat be eased by gargling with breadcrumbs.

Desire to travel

The trip by boat is the clue in the willow-pattern. Symptoms get better when they travel, as if the motion makes them leave the symptoms behind.

The birds

The romantic picture of the birds enjoying eternal happiness is another interesting paradox in the willow-pattern, for the Ignatia type of person is often unaccountably afraid of birds.

And ever after?

Does Ignatia allow the individual to enjoy life afterwards? If it does, then it has been a well chosen remedy. But if, as Kent says, the condition occurs again and again and threatens to become chronic, then Natrum mur, the so-called chronic of Ignatia will often finish the cure.

Sometimes, however, the individual only partially picks up and the reaction turns into one of continued low spirits, coupled with a feeling of indifference to everyone around them. They may want to just get in the car and drive away regardless of what happens to their loved ones. For them, Sepia may be the most apt and will possibly bring about marked improvement.

Which potency?

My feeling is that since the main emphasis of this reaction is to produce a definite disruption of the emotions, then a moderate or a high potency of Ignatia is needed. I would suggest a 30c or a 200c taken every twelve hours for three doses.



Keith Souter MB ChB FRCGP MFHom MIPsiMed DipMedAc is a part-time GP in Yorkshire. He also has a private holistic medicine practice and is a newspaper columnist as well as the author of *Homeopathy for the Third Age* and *Homeopathy: Heart & Soul*.