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**Editors:
Ernst Jucker**

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Haffkine – A Historical Appreciation

By EDYTHE LUTZKER

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Platinum Jubilee of the Haffkine Institute, Bombay,
founded by Waldemar M. Haffkine in 1897

The Honorable Dr. Indira Gandhi, Dr. Gaitondé, Distinguished Scientists, Honored Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, and last but by no means least, *friends of humanity*.

You have heard, and will hear, from our Honored Speakers about the scientific contributions to the human race made by Waldemar M. Haffkine whom we honor here, in this Jubilee Year. Some of you may have known, more or less, but in any case far too little, about these contributions, and I am pleased and grateful that I can add another and historical dimension to your evaluation of him as a human being devoted to the alleviation of human suffering by means of his anticholera and antiplague vaccines which he first tested upon himself to avoid possible risk to others.

When, in 1897, the world-renowned scientist, Lord Lister, described Haffkine at a public dinner in London as a 'saviour of mankind', he did not exaggerate! Lord Sandhurst, Governor of Bombay, in 1899, at the opening ceremony of Government House to which Haffkine's Laboratory was finally moved, said that 'when the history of our times is written, his name will be given an honored place'. If both these statements are true, and I can vouch for their accuracy, why is his name and his work known only to so very few people in the world? An answer to that question, perplexing and disconcerting though it is, must be sought by medical historians of the late 19th century, and as a member of that profession, I have set myself the task of finding an answer. I ask for your help.

The number of people who were inoculated with Haffkine's vaccines up to 1915 is second only to those who received smallpox vaccinations. Since then those numbers have greatly increased. In all his work, Haffkine, a pioneer in medical bacteriology, youngest of the emerging sciences, had to fight practically single-handed, since he approached the subject not as a physician would but as a scientist and humanist. Arrayed against him were the vested interests of the medical profession, in Great Britain as well as in India, whose medical education had so far not included bacteriology. They were traditionally suspicious of interference with their sphere. It is impossible to exaggerate the benefits humanity has inherited from his work and the example which has enabled science to cope with, and to some extent control, cholera, typhoid and plague, and those vastly extended benefits that have advanced to the present time.

E. Lutzker

Perhaps you may wonder why I, an American, have been moved to devote myself practically and exclusively, to the life history of this great Russian scientist who worked for India and for ailing humanity around the world and whom free India has honored so profusely. Why, then, have I been ceaselessly traveling to so many countries to gather source materials and other relevant information for his full-length biography which I am commissioned by the National Library of Medicine of the USA to write? It is because Haffkine was, first of all a *humanist*, then a *scientist*, and only last of all, a nationalist, in its best sense of that much misused word!

The *humanity* of this dedicated pioneer is the source of my inspiration. No boundaries of geography, race, color, sex, politics, or religion existed for him. Nor was he motivated by economic or financial personal gain or fame.

It is a tribute to his greatness that his name is now alive in India where on 21 August 1971, V. V. Giri, your President, unveiled a plaque informing students and staff of Grant Medical College in Bombay that *there* Haffkine created the antiplague vaccine in a makeshift laboratory in a corridor. It is a tribute to his greatness that a Haffkine Memorial Grove of over 1,000 trees now exists in Israel in the Kennedy Peace Forest, planted there by this Committee in October 1970, on the 40th anniversary of his death.

Haffkine's work constructed the truly monumental 'Gateway to India' in the field of preventive medicine which gave birth to the concept of global public health. Historical research is like life-giving water, which sustains the flower of scientific medicine causing it to bloom and to spread its perfume. When history is omitted from scientific research, the flowers die. It has been said that 'Those who learn nothing from history are doomed to repeat its mistakes'.

The Waldemar Mordecai Haffkine International Memorial Committee, through me, its Vice-President, is honored and pleased to have presented an album of photographs, together with congratulatory messages from Senator Edward Kennedy and the U.S. Ambassador to India, the Honorable Mr. Keating, of the unveiling of a plaque commemorating Haffkine's work at the Institut Pasteur in Paris, on 21 September 1972, which, hopefully, will be prominently exhibited. A large photograph of him has been framed and also hung in conspicuous places of honor in other Societies with which he was associated by virtue of his work.

It is hoped that scholarships in honor of Haffkine will be established in many countries to stimulate young people to follow in his footsteps and to carry on his ideas. With such an example, young people cannot fail to be inspired with his principles of dedication to humanity, which the world so badly longs for in these troubled times!

Thank you for this opportunity to extend my hand in friendship to all of you. I ask your help in *really* making Haffkine's name and work as well-known as it rightfully deserves to be!

He is truly a *humanist*, a *scientist*, a *giant in oblivion*!

