

The Father of Ayurveda: The Unrevealed Jamini

The history of tradition in medical science continues through generations; unpublished information now comes to light

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July 1, 2020

Today, the first of July, is Doctors' Day.

Just as this day has been designated to commemorate and pay tribute to the birthday of a great Bengali physician, so too, away from the glare of publicity and within a different stream of medicine, the birth anniversary of another exceptionally brilliant Bengali physician has for generations been observed on this very day, transcending the borders of the two Bengals. He is Bengal's pride, **Jamini Bhushan Ray**.

Education and Student Life

Jamini Bhushan Ray was born on 1 July 1879 in Poyogram, in the Khulna district of present-day Bangladesh. After completing his schooling in his village, he studied at South Suburban School in Bhowanipur, Calcutta. He then obtained an M.A. in Sanskrit Shastra from Sanskrit College, Calcutta.

In 1905, he earned his Bachelor of Medicine degree from Calcutta Medical College and was awarded a gold medal in recognition of his academic excellence. However, because of his strong attraction to the traditional practice of Ayurveda, he came into contact with **Mahamahopadhyaya Bijoy Ratna Sen** and went on to establish a new era in Bengal through his lifelong practice and promotion of Ayurveda.

From Allopathy to Ayurveda

At that time, many people could not accept that a brilliant, gold-medal-winning student of Calcutta Medical College would choose to practise Ayurveda. But Ray had profound respect for the indigenous medical tradition. Having personally witnessed the scientific principles of diagnosis in Ayurvedic theory and the comprehensiveness of Ayurvedic medical science, he resolved to devote his entire life to Ayurveda.

Addressing his critics, he declared: “I would rather spend my whole life earning my livelihood by selling *pachan* [traditional digestive medicine], but I will live by the traditional Ayurvedic science of my country.”

This determination to go against the prevailing current eventually carried Jamini Bhushan to the pinnacle of fame. Even today, it continues to inspire students and practitioners of medicine.

The Madras Ayurveda Conference and Jamini

The seashore at Madras, 1915.

About five Bengali Ayurvedic physicians, returning from the **Seventh National Vaidya Conference**, were engaged in a serious discussion.

Mahamahopadhyaya Tarka Bhushan said:

“Outside Bengal, in a place that holds the position of a great centre of Ayurveda, there exists such a fine educational institution; yet in our own Bengal there is nothing of the kind, Jamini.

If you wished, could you not organise such an institution for the study and discussion of Ayurveda? How much money would be required?”

Jamini Bhushan replied:

“There may be no shortage of money, but there is a shortage of workers.”

Pandit Tarka Bhushan then pointed to two Ayurvedic scholars who were present — **Rajvaidya Biraj Charan Gupta** and **Kavyatirtha Surendra Das** — and said:

“Why? Can these enthusiastic workers not make some sacrifice for Ayurveda and for the country?”

Sitting in a moving carriage along the seaside road of Madras, at that auspicious moment, the word “**sacrifice**”, uttered by the guru in connection with Ayurveda, would later plant the seed of the **Ashtanga Ayurveda Vidyalaya** in the heart of Calcutta.

Establishment of the Ashtanga Ayurveda Vidyalaya

After returning to Calcutta, Jamini Bhushan, with the assistance of Biraj Charan, began the Ayurvedic school in a rented house at **29 Fariapukur Street**, under a three-year lease. It opened with twelve students and three teachers.

The students received free education, together with arrangements for accommodation and meals.

Jamini Bhushan formed a small four-member executive committee, appointing his friend, Magistrate **Krishnadas Bandyopadhyay**, as secretary. Jamini Bhushan Ray served as Principal, Biraj Charan Gupta as Vice-Principal, and Surendra Kumar Kavyatirtha as Medical Officer in charge of the charitable dispensary.

Later, **Satya Charan Sen**, formerly the Rajvaidya of the Chanchal royal family in Malda district, joined the institution and played a highly important role.

To present Ayurveda in Bengal through a modern system of education, Jamini Bhushan Ray spent considerable sums of money to establish a **medical museum** and a **chemical laboratory** at the school.

News of this unprecedented initiative for the advancement of Ayurvedic education in Bengal spread as far as Bombay, Madras, and Ceylon.

Jamini Bhushan devoted himself simultaneously to the school and to the dispensary.

Seeing that more than a hundred patients were receiving free Ayurvedic treatment every day, **Mr. Penn**, then Chairman of the Calcutta Corporation, sanctioned an annual grant of **2,500 rupees** for charitable medical treatment from the month of Chaitra, Bengali year 1325.

Despite this steady progress, Jamini Bhushan faced severe financial difficulties on several occasions while trying to maintain both Ayurvedic education and the charitable dispensary.

When it became impossible to remain at the Fariapukur premises, the school was moved to a substantial building at **17/19 Shyambazar Bridge Road**, at a monthly rent of 230 rupees.

It is said that Jamini personally raised funds with the help of volunteers at major meetings, associations, and fairs throughout Calcutta, thereby nourishing and strengthening Ayurveda in Bengal.

With **Mahamahopadhyaya Gananath Sen Saraswati** as President of the Council, Jamini Bhushan had the institution registered in **1919 as a public institution**, declaring it to be a common asset of the people.

Foundation Stone Laid by Mahatma Gandhi and the Establishment of the Permanent Ayurveda College

In Bengali year 1329, with the support of **Surendranath Mallik**, Chairman of the Calcutta Corporation, approximately **one bigha and fourteen kathas of land** were acquired at **170 Raja**

Dinendra Street, south of New Shyam Park, in a particularly healthy locality. The process of constructing a permanent institution then began.

On **6 May 1925**, leading personalities of the country assembled for a ceremony at which **Mahatma Gandhi laid the foundation stone of the institution.**

Jamini's dream now emerged into the full light of public attention. Donations began arriving from all directions for the permanent establishment of the Ayurvedic school.

Today, the institution is known as the **J. B. Roy State Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital.** Carrying within it the glorious history of one of the oldest Ayurvedic educational institutions in Asia, it continues to uphold Bengal's tradition of Ayurvedic medical science.

Books and Monthly Journal

Alongside his work for the advancement of Ayurvedic education in Bengal, Jamini Bhushan Ray authored several important books, including:

- *Roga Vinischaya*
- *Shalakya Tantra*
- *Kumar Tantra*
- *Visha Tantra*

He also published a monthly periodical entitled **Ayurveda**, which is said to have represented a landmark development in

the practice and study of Ayurveda throughout Bengal at that time.

Jamini Bhushan Ray as a Physician

As a physician, Jamini Bhushan Ray possessed extraordinary talent. He was a physician highly skilled in **pulse diagnosis**, capable of identifying *Arishta Lakshana* — ominous or prognostic signs — and practised an integrative approach to medicine.

A detailed consideration of his work shows that, in his effort to make Ayurvedic medicine suitable for the modern age, Jamini Bhushan incorporated selected elements of modern medicine into Ayurvedic education and practice.

The inclusion of **anatomy and physiology in the Ayurvedic curriculum**, together with the practice of **cadaveric dissection**, were among the innovations conceived under his leadership.

At the same time, his remarkable clinical skill brought him considerable success within a short period.

Jamini Bhushan served as personal physician to kings, princes, zamindars, and other prominent individuals not only in Bengal but also in regions such as **Gwalior, Indore, and Tripura**.

He was a **gold medallist**, a **Fellow of the University of Calcutta**, and a member of both the **Royal Asiatic Society** and the **Calcutta Medical Club**.

He also presided over the **All India Ayurveda Conference in Madras**.

Before his death, Jamini Bhushan donated more than a lakh of rupees from his personal savings, together with property, for the advancement of Ayurveda.

He passed away on **11 August 1926**, at only **47 years of age**.

Source: *Ayurveda Patrika*

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