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Kaviraj Jamini Bhusan Roy: The man who led the Ayurveda renaissance in Bengal

Shakti Bhushan¹, Suparna Saha¹, Asit Panja²

Abstract

Kaviraj Jamini Bhusan Roy is an eminent Ayurveda scholar and philanthropist from Bengal. Roy demonstrated academic excellence, graduating high school at 14 years of age. Despite earning a gold medal in Western medicine in 1905, he embraced Ayurveda, establishing a successful practice in Kolkata. His significant contributions include prolific writings on Ayurveda and the establishment of the Ashtanga Ayurveda College and Hospital in 1916 at Kolkata, presently known as J. B. Roy State Ayurvedic Medical College & Hospital, one of the earliest institutions of Ayurveda in Bengal. Roy played a crucial role in modernizing the manufacturing of Ayurveda medicines by adopting standardized manufacturing practices. His indomitable spirit and passion for philanthropy are evident in setting up medical care dispensaries across the state and institutions such as J. B. Roy State Ayurvedic Medical College & Hospital. The study is an attempt to meticulously document his life and accomplishments, marking his contribution to the history of contemporary Ayurveda.

Keywords:

Jamini Bhusan Roy, Yamini Bhushan Roy, J. B. Roy State Ayurvedic Medical College & Hospital, Life profile

Introduction

Bengal is known for its rich and diverse culture that spans centuries. It has contributed significantly to the cultural and scientific landscape of both ancient and modern India. Contributions toward Ayurveda are notable among them. This land has given birth to legendary scholars, and the list spans from Ācārya Cakrapāṇi Dutta (eleventh century AD) to Ācārya Jogīndranātha Sen (twentieth century AD), commentators of Caraka Samhita. These authors have contributed significantly to Ayurveda literature. Scholars across the region promoted various traditions of healing and schools such as śāstrīya paramparā, vaidyaginni paramparā, śuddha-rasvaidya paramparā, tāntrika paramparā, miśrita paramparā or bhaiṣajyaratnāvalī paramparā, and cakradatta paramparā are worth mentioning.^[1]

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Figure 1: Kaviraj Jamini Bhusan Roy (1879-1926)

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¹Department of Ayurveda,
Central Ayurveda
Research Institute Kolkata,
CCRAS, Ministry of Ayush,
Govt. of India, Kolkata,
²Department of Samhita
Siddhanta, National
Institute of Ayurveda,
Jaipur, India

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Shakti Bhushan,
Department of
Ayurveda, Central
Ayurveda Research
Institute Kolkata,
CCRAS, Ministry of
Ayush, Govt. of India,
Kolkata 700091, West
Bengal, India.
E-mail: shakti.imsbhu@gmail.com

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However, slowly, the system started to decline, and the nineteenth century was a period of transition and challenges for Ayurveda in Bengal. Kaviraj Jamini Bhushan Roy [Figure 1] was a visionary whose relentless efforts brought the revival and renaissance of Ayurveda in Bengal. In those days, the practice of Ayurveda was not awe-inspiring; it was considered ancient and way past its prime. His decision to practice Ayurveda despite the perception of it being a less glamorous field at the time and his determination to make a living out of it was a testament to his passion for the traditional medical system. Intending to revive the glory of Ayurveda, it was lost over the ages mainly due to a lack of support from foreign rulers for ancient Indian traditions. Kaviraj Jamini Bhushan Roy set up the Vaidyaraj Pharmacy that sold only Ayurvedic medicines and later established Ashtanga Ayurveda College, presently known as J. B. Roy State Ayurvedic Medical College & Hospital.^[2,3]

Family and Education

Kaviraj Jamini Bhushan Roy was born on July 1, 1879, in Poyogram village, Khulna District, Bengal (now in Bangladesh). His father, Kaviraj Panchanan Roy (known as *Kavi Chintamani*), was a renowned Ayurvedic doctor and Sanskrit scholar.^[2-4] He received his early education at the village school in Poyogram. Kaviraj Panchanan Roy, recognizing his son's skills, sent him to Kolkata (then known as Calcutta, the capital of British India). At the age of 14, he completed high school at South Suburban School in Bhowanipore, South Calcutta.^[5] After high school, Jamini Bhushan enrolled in his Bachelor of Arts studies at Government Sanskrit College, Calcutta. After graduation, he pursued his Master of Arts in Sanskrit language and later medical education at Calcutta Medical College.^[3,6]

All this time, he was learning Ayurveda under the supervision of his father, Kaviraj Panchanan Roy, who was a renowned practitioner in his own right. This early training in Sanskrit and Ayurveda prepared the path for his later academic achievements and profession as an Ayurvedic practitioner and Sanskrit scholar. In 1905, he completed his Bachelor of Medicine (M.B.) degree and was awarded a gold medal for holding first rank in the final examination. The citation accompanying the medal highlighted his exceptional proficiency in Gynecology and Midwifery.^[4,7] Despite this remarkable achievement, Roy decided not to pursue a career in Western medicine. Instead, following in his father's footsteps, he became a Kaviraj or an Ayurvedic physician. He took formal lessons from Kaviraj Mahamahopadhyay Bijoy Ratna Sen, a leading Ayurvedic physician of that time, for higher learning in Ayurveda.^[4,8]

Soon after his formal studies, Bagala Marwari Hospital, a modern hospital, hired him to provide Ayurveda treatment for a monthly salary of Rs. 40, a significant sum

in those days.^[2,5] His reputation as an expert in Ayurvedic medicine snowballed, and he became known for his ability to treat various ailments using Ayurvedic remedies.

Kaviraj Jamini Bhushan Roy was married to Saroj Bala Devi. They were blessed with six children. Unfortunately, the two youngest sons of Jamini Bhushan Roy passed away too early, during their late teenage, causing immense grief to the family.^[5]

Philanthropy and Social Engagements

Despite being educated in the Western system of medicine, Kaviraj Jamini Bhushan Roy decided to follow in his family's footsteps and practice Ayurveda in 1906.^[9] He was determined to make a living practicing Ayurveda and wanted to spread the essence of Ayurveda among the masses. He once famously said, *"If I cannot make a living practicing Ayurveda, then I shall make a living by selling Panchan (Ayurvedic laxative)."*^[5]

Despite Ayurveda's declining status in Bengal, he remained dedicated to his profession. He believed in the potency of Ayurveda and worked tirelessly to promote its benefits. His unwavering commitment to Ayurveda inspired many others to follow in his footsteps and played a significant role in reviving the popularity of Ayurveda in Bengal. In pursuit of this goal, he established the Vaidyaraj Pharmacy, which sold only Ayurvedic medicines.^[4] He adopted modern manufacturing techniques at the pharmacy, adhering to quality control and assurance mechanisms.

As his recognition as an expert Ayurveda physician increased, he began to charge higher fees to support his research studies and raise public awareness about the system. While his rates rose from Rs. 4 to Rs. 32, he continued to treat needy patients for free. Wealthy patients, even from faraway places, sought treatment under him and were ready to pay hefty amounts, up to Rs. 1000, as consultation fees. He treated the Maharajas of Gwalior, Indore, and Tripura, among others. His name and reputation in Ayurvedic treatment increased to the point where he was elected President of the 7th All India Ayurvedic Conference in Madras in 1915. During his visit to the southern part of the country, he was very impressed with the Madras Ayurvedic College and its functioning. This inspired him to establish a similar institution in his native Calcutta.^[9-12]

J. B. Roy State Ayurvedic Medical College & Hospital

Jamini Bhushan Roy State Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital (J. B. Roy State Ayurvedic Medical College

& Hospital), formerly known as Ashtanga Ayurveda Vidyalaya and Ashtanga Ayurveda Arogyashala, stands as a distinguished teaching hospital.^[5] In 1916, Kaviraj Jamini Bhushan Roy founded the Ashtanga Ayurveda College and Hospital in a rented house at 29 Fariapukur Street in Calcutta. His vision was to blend traditional Ayurvedic practices with modern scientific methods to revive the ancient Indian medical tradition neglected during foreign rule.^[2,8] Under the leadership of Sir Ashutosh Mukhopadhyay, President of the Board of College Trustees, and Shri Mahamahopadhyaya Kaviraj, President of the College Council, Jamini Bhushan Roy sought support from all Bengalis and Indians to fulfill its vision. His innovative approach quickly caught the attention of prominent figures such as Mahatma Gandhi. In 1925, Mahatma Gandhi laid the foundation stone for the institute's new building on Raja Dinendra Street in Calcutta, where the present J. B. Roy State Ayurvedic Medical College & Hospital stands. The college and hospital continue his legacy of providing high-quality Ayurvedic education and healthcare.^[3] The institution has played a pivotal role in nurturing generations of Ayurveda physicians. The institution and its notable alumni have emerged as a center of excellence for academics, research, and healthcare facilities in Ayurveda. The college is presently offering the undergraduate course (BAMS) in Ayurveda, and it is the only graduate institute in the Government sector in the state of West Bengal.^[4,7]

Kaviraj Jamini Bhushan Roy Patipukur T.B. Hospital

Kaviraj Jamini Bhushan Roy Patipukur T.B. Hospital, located in the northern part of Kolkata, was initially established as a 60-bed hospital to treat tuberculosis patients, a significant public health concern in the early twentieth century. The hospital is situated on the land Kaviraj Jamini Bhushan Roy bequeathed to his institution in his last will. Seven years after his death, the foundation stone for the hospital was laid by Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, an eminent physician, freedom fighter, and later Chief Minister of West Bengal, a close friend of Kaviraj Jamini Bhushan Roy. After that, it was renamed as Patipukur Ayurvedic Hospital and is running with 94 beds.^[13,14] It provides treatment for various respiratory diseases and related illnesses. The hospital has a dedicated team of healthcare professionals who provide personalized treatment plans to the patients. The establishment has separate dedicated departments for both Ayurveda and Allopathy.^[15]

Awards and Honors

In recognition of the substantial contributions of Jamini Bhushan Roy, a road near Ashtanga Ayurveda Hospital

in Calcutta was named Jamini Kaviraj Row in his honor, commemorating his contributions to the institution and Ayurveda.^[5,16,17]

Publications

The publications of Kaviraj Jamini Bhushan Roy are based on ancient Indian medical texts and provide a unique insight into the principles and practices of Ayurveda. His book "Diseases—Their Origin and Diagnosis" (*Roga Vinishchaya*) emphasizes gaps in classical disease descriptions that practitioners may struggle to understand for applying in clinical practice. It received widespread critical acclaim, further cementing his reputation as a leading figure in Ayurvedic medicine. Additionally, he published a monthly journal in Bengali called *Ayurveda*, which helped to disseminate information about Ayurveda to a broader audience. This journal was published under the editorial guidance of Kaviraj Srivirajcharan Gupta Kavibhushan with Kaviraj Jamini Bhushan Roy as coeditor.

Other Books

1. "A Treatise on Diseases of Ear, Nose, Throat and Mouth,"^[18] a book on "Salakya Tantra,"^[7,9] dealing with the diagnosis and management of diseases of the ear, nose, throat, and mouth.
2. "The Care of Infants and the Diseases of Children" (*Kumara Tantra*) is a book on Kaumarabhritya dealing with the care of infants and treating diseases commonly affecting children. The book was published in Kolkata during the Bengali year 1320. The book's content is organized into five chapters: *Kumarchariya*, *Dhatriparcharya*, *Danta Nirgaman and Danta Roga*, *Stanya Dusti*, and *Procedure of Vaccination*. This structured organization suggests the book serves as a comprehensive guide for practitioners and care providers, offering valuable insights into childcare and healthcare practices.^[18]
3. "A Manual of Toxicology" (*Bisha Tantra*) provides detailed information about toxins, their effects on the body, and their treatment according to the principles of Ayurveda.^[7,9]

Reminiscence

Kaviraj Jamini Bhushan Roy's vision and dedication were instrumental in reviving traditional Indian medicine in Bengal, which was in decline. He was crucial in bringing modern techniques and quality measures to drug manufacturing, making it more accessible and appealing to the masses. Through his efforts, Ayurveda gained recognition as a legitimate form of treatment, and his legacy continues to inspire practitioners of Ayurveda to this day. Kaviraj Jamini Bhushan Roy's sudden demise on August 11, 1926, stunned the medical community of Bengal. A day before his death at the age of 47, he contributed Rs. 1,47,403 to his beloved Ashtanga

Ayurveda Vidyalaya. His contributions to the field of Ayurveda and his efforts to combine ancient knowledge with modern medicine were widely recognized and appreciated. Kaviraj Jamini Bhushan Roy realized that to save a fallen nation's energy, its indigenous medicine system must be revived. During that time, Bengal was plagued by ailments such as malaria, cholera, dyspepsia, and typhoid. He believed that if traditional Ayurvedic treatment were restored, the disease would be eradicated on a wide scale. The establishment of Ashtanga Ayurveda College is also a testament to the revival of the system and its contribution to public health issues.

Conclusion

The glorious past of Ayurveda in Bengal underwent a renaissance through the efforts of luminaries such as Jamini Bhushan Roy. His life as an Ayurvedic physician, Sanskrit scholar, and philanthropist became illustrious in the Bengal Ayurveda community. The Ayurveda college established by him has become the cornerstone of Ayurveda in Bengal in the present times. From building a prosperous practice in Kolkata, dedicating himself to the study and practice of Sanskrit and Ayurveda, and authoring various books, he contributed to diverse domains in Ayurveda. Roy had a lifelong enthusiasm for Ayurveda and Sanskrit despite the numerous obstacles he overcame through his efforts. Despite his brief life, he will be remembered as one of the great luminaries of Sanskrit and Ayurveda.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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हिन्दी सारांश

कविराज जामिनी भूषण राय: एक व्यक्ति जिसने बंगाल में आयुर्वेद पुनर्जागरण का नेतृत्व किया

शक्ति भूषण, सुपर्णा साहा, असित पंजा

प्रस्तुत लेख आयुर्वेद, संस्कृत और परोपकार के एक प्रतिष्ठित व्यक्ति कविराज जामिनी भूषण राय के जीवन और प्रभावों का विश्लेषण करता है। 1879 में पैदा हुए राय ने शैक्षणिक उत्कृष्टता का प्रदर्शन किया, 14 वर्ष की आयु में हाई स्कूल पास कर लिया। 1905 में पश्चिमी चिकित्सा में गोल्ड मेडल जीतने के बावजूद, उन्होंने आयुर्वेद को अपनाया, कोलकाता में एक सफल प्रैक्टिस स्थापित की। उनके महत्वपूर्ण योगदानों में आयुर्वेद पर प्रभावी लेखन और 1916 में अष्टांग आयुर्वेद कॉलेज और अस्पताल की स्थापना शामिल है, जिसमें आधुनिक प्रणालियों के साथ पारंपरिक प्रथाओं का समन्वय करने पर जोर दिया गया है। राय ने आयुर्वेदिक चिकित्सा मानकीकरण में एक महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई और 1915 में सातवें अखिल भारतीय आयुर्वेदिक सम्मेलन के अध्यक्ष के रूप में कार्य किया। उनका परोपकार उनके द्वारा स्थापित सुलभ चिकित्सा देखभाल अस्पतालों और संस्थानों जैसे जामिनी भूषण राय राज्य आयुर्वेदिक कॉलेज और अस्पताल में स्पष्ट रूप से दिखाई देता है। प्रस्तुत लेख उनके द्वारा शुरू की गई पहलों जैसे पतिपुकर टीबी अस्पताल के माध्यम से सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य पर उनके लंबे समय तक के प्रभाव को दर्शाता है, जिससे उनकी विरासत 20वीं शताब्दी के शुरुआती भारत में पारंपरिक चिकित्सा, शिक्षा और सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य में बनी रहती है।