

A PIONEER OF NEO-AYURVEDIC APPROACH

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I. Introduction :

The Indian renaissance in the nineteenth century is notable 'for its freedom of enquiry, its thirst for science, its large human sympathy, its pure and sifted ethics, its reverent but not uncritical regard for the past' (1) along with its 'new aspirations for the future' (1). The period around the sixth decade of the century witnessed the birth in Bengal of a large number of striking personalities, who, by their pioneering activities, opened the gateway to an epoch of educational, scientific and cultural revolution in Bengal. Some of the great sons of Bengal were Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858), Rabindra Nath Tagore, Prafulla Chandra Ray, Nilratan Sircar, (1861), Swami Vivekananda (1863) and Ashutosh Mukherjee, Ramendra Sundar Trivedi (1864), the birth Centenaries of whom have been or are being celebrated recently. The flourishing atmosphere of the age continued to give birth to many more brilliant Sons of Bengal, among whom the name of Kaviraj Jamini Bhusan Ray, Kaviratna, may be mentioned with profound pride and reverence for his priceless sacrifices in the cause of Ayurveda.

II. Education :

2. In 1879 at Payogram in the district of Khulna, born of a noble and illustrious father like late Kaviraj Panchanan Ray, Kavichintamani, Jamini Bhusan had his early education at the village School, followed up by studies at the South Suburban School of Bhowanipur in Calcutta. An erudite scholar his father trained his son, Jamini Bhusan, in Sanskrit side by side with Western education. After passing out of the Entrance Examination, Jamini Bhusan, had his higher education from the Government Sanskrit College. He passed the M.A. Examination in Sanskrit, while he was a student in Calcutta Medical College. He took his M.B. degree in 1905, securing a gold medal and a first class certificate of honour for his high proficiency in Midwifery and Gynaecology. Initiated in the Ayurvedic studies at the feet of his able father, he completed the study of it, under the august tutorage of Mahamahopadhyaya Kaviraj Vijay Ratna Sen, the then leading Ayurvedic Physician.

III. Professional Activities :

3. Educated in the Western system of medicine, Jamini Bhusan (in 1906) started practising the Ayurveda, following the ancestral profession of the family. Observing the decadent professional position of Ayurveda, some of his medical friends tried to dissuade him from practising the same. To them, (it is said), Jamini Bhusan's bold and resolute reply was, "If nothing can be earned out of practice in Ayurveda, I shall prefer earning my livelihood by dealing in "Pachan", rather than practising medicine" (2). Initially, he took up the post of a Kaviraj

at a monthly salary of Rs. 40/- in the Bagala Marwari Hospital. With a view to reviving the pristine glory of Ayurveda, he made probably pioneering attempts for systematizing and standardising Ayurvedic medicines with scientific methods and precision and set up the Vaidyaraj Pharmacy to that end. Immediately after, he achieved phenomenal success. His name and fame spread far and wide in India and abroad. His fee of Rs. 4/- had to be enhanced to Rs. 32/- and while on attendance in mufusil areas, he used to charge a fee of Rs. 1000/- (one thousand). It augmented the prestige of Ayurveda in the eye of Indian Chief, among whom those from Gwalior, Indore, Tipperah etc., often requisitioned his services. But at the same time, he used to treat the poor not only free of charges but provided them with free medicines as well.

4. Jamini Bhusan's wide practice and eminence in the Ayurvedic profession was recognised in his election as the President of the Seventh All India Ayurvedic Conference held at Madras in 1915. It is said that on that occasion, he being highly impressed with the Madras Ayurvedic College, where the All India Ayurvedic Exhibition was held in that connection, made a vow of establishing an Ayurvedic College in Bengal with a view to reviving Ayurveda in the modern light as modern time demanded.

5. On his return to Calcutta, he founded in 1916 the Ashtanga Ayurveda College and Hospitals in a rented house at 29, Faria Pukur Street. The full history of the College deserves to be narrated separately. The practical idealism of its founder attracted Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, who laid the foundation-stone of the buildings of the Institution on the 6th of May, 1925, in its present site at Raja Dinendra Street. Pupils from near and distant places in India, Nepal and Ceylon gathered there to learn at his feet the system of medicine of ancient India in collaboration with modern scientific discoveries and achievements. This institution was to him more than his life-blood. Aside from contributing Rs. 70,000/- (Seventy thousand rupees) towards the cost of construction of the buildings of the institution, he bequeathed prior to his death on the 11th August of 1926 in his last WILL the following properties of his for the cause of this institution :-

- (a) 13 Cottahs of land at Ballygunj
- (b) 6 Cottahs of land at Grey Street
- (c) 12 bighas of land at Patipukur along with the buildings of his Garden House situated thereon (on which the present T.B. Hospital, attached to the institution, is located)
- (d) Health recovery houses at Kurseong and at Ranchi

This princely munificence alone may well claim for its donor a memorable place in the domain of Ayurveda.

IV. Academic Distinction :

6. His indefatigable endeavours did not rest with the establishment of the Ayurvedic College and Hospitals. In order to help his students learn easily of the Ayurvedic system of Medicine, Jamini Bhusan wrote several text

books on "Salakya Tantra" (on ear nose and throat diseases), "Prasuti Tantra" (Midwifery), "Bisha Tantra" (Toxicology), "Kumara Tantra" (on Children diseases) and several others. His "Roga Binischeya" (the treatise on diagnosis of diseases) earned for him wide reputation. Apart from these, his book written in Bengali under the style of "Swastha Niti" in three parts, used for some years to be taught as prescribed text books on Hygiene in High English Schools. He also acted as examiner of the Benaras Hindu University and of various other Universities and Boards. Jamini Bhusan brought out a monthly Journal in Bengali entitled "Ayurveda", which was a very useful vehicle for propagating the ideas of Ayurveda and other medical affairs.

7. Jamini Bhusan was elected fellow of the Calcutta University. He was also a member of the Royal Asiatic Society and various other institutions.

V. His Outlook Towards Ayurveda :

8. Jamini Bhusan's reverent attitude towards the system of medicine of the ancient India, was subject to his Scientific bent of mind. As a true man of science, he kept 'a liberal and capacious mind, ever ready to be enlightened with fresh rays of knowledge'. (3). He regarded Ayurveda as 'a whole science of life' and so he held that 'it would be a retrograde policy if our reverence for the past blind us to the manifold improvements of modern science'. (3). He was fully aware of that 'want of proper culture (of the Ayurvedic system of medicine) according to right methods of investigation is mainly responsible for the neglect to which many parts of Ayurvedic science have been consigned.' (3) It appears from one of the general observations, made by the members of the Suddha Ayurvedic Education Committee (1963) that 'the Ayurvedic texts continued to assimilate all useful knowledge that came their way through the ages right upto the Moghul period' (4) This assimilative aspect of Ayurvedic system, so pointedly brought home to all concerned in 1963, caught the imaginative mind of Jamini Bhusan long ago. Conscious of these and of the stagnancy of Ayurveda lacking in the further progress in Surgery and Midwifery, Jamini Bhusan specially equipped himself with the knowledge of these subjects, so as to be truly able to regenerate the eight branches of Ayurveda. All these indirectly show the aversion of Jamini Bhusan towards 'a science remaining static,' which was large beyond measures. His aspirations therefore, were 'that greater facilities would be given to the systematic and scientific study of Ayurveda by the establishment of Colleges and hospitals, gardens for medicinal plants, well-stocked libraries and also by the collection of rare manuscripts and the publication of authentic treatises.' (3)

VI. Appreciation :

9. One of the significant observations made by the members of the Suddha Ayurvedic Education Committee (1963) relates 'to the inclusion of the study of comparative medicine in the Suddha Ayurveda Course, as it will keep the graduate abreast of latest trends in medical and scientific thought and by broadening his horizon, enable him to understand and appreciate better the basic principles of Ayurveda in relation to other systems of medicine.' (4) What is being broadly recognised in recent times of this Neo-Ayurvedic approach, so to say, was not

only conceived by Jamini Bhusan long before, but translated by him fully in his life as would abundantly appear from the foregoing paragraphs. He was thus far ahead of his times and he may, perhaps, with good reasons, be called a pioneer of this Neo-Ayurvedic approach. Well versed in the Western System of Medicine Jamini Bhusan, by the magnanimous dedication of his life and all, boldly helped paving the royal road to the practice of Ayurvedic system of medicine in all the glory and dignity of its own.

VII. Acknowledgment :

10. Grateful thanks are due to the authorities, of the J. B. Ashtanga Ayurveda Vidyalaya and Ayurvediya Arogyasala, who so kindly provided this opportunity for paying the author's tributes to the revered founder of the Institution, on the occasion of the formal making over of the same to the Government of West Bengal for being run as a State Ayurvedic College and Hospitals.

Debts of thanks are also acknowledged to the authors and authorities of the following publications, which have been freely consulted. The numbers within brackets against the publications indicate the citations from these publications referred to above.

Publications :

1. An Advanced History of India—by Dr's. Majumdar, Raichaudhuri and Datta (1)
2. Ayurveda Prachar—Part I, Kartick 1337 B.S. (2)
3. Report of the proceeding of the Seventh All India Ayurvedic Conference and Exhibition held at Madras in December, 1915. (3)
4. Report of the Suddha Ayurvedic Education Committee, Government of India. (4)
5. Ayurveda Prachar, Part II, Jaistha 1338 B.S.
6. Ayurveda Mahamandal Ka Rajat Jayanti Grantha (Protham Bhag).
7. A short report of the growth and development of the J. B. Ashtanga Ayurveda Vidyalaya and Ayurvediya Arogyasala (7 January 1953).