

Jamini Bhushan Ray

Jamini Bhushan Ray (Bengali: যামিনী ভূষণ রায়; 1 July 1879 (17 Asharh 1286 BS) – 11 August 1926 (26 Srabon 1333 BS)) was an Indian Ayurvedic physician, Sanskrit scholar, educator and philanthropist. He founded the Ashtanga Ayurveda College and Hospital in Calcutta in 1916 and established the Vaidyaraj Pharmacy, both of which formed part of his efforts to modernise Ayurvedic education and pharmaceutical practice during the late colonial period. Contemporary scholarship identifies him as an important figure in the revival of Ayurveda in Bengal through the development of educational institutions, pharmaceutical enterprises and professional organisations.^[1]

Trained in both Sanskrit scholarship and Western medicine, Ray advocated the systematic study of Ayurveda and helped promote its transition from a predominantly hereditary and apprenticeship-based tradition to one supported by formal educational institutions, hospitals and scholarly publications. His work contributed to the broader movement for the institutionalisation of Ayurvedic medicine in twentieth-century India.^[1]

Early life and education

Ray was born in Poyogram village in the Khulna District of the Bengal Presidency, then part of British India (now Bangladesh). He was the son of the Ayurvedic physician Panchanan Ray, who was known by the honorific title *Kavichintamani*.^[2] After receiving his early education in his native village, he moved to Calcutta for higher studies and attended South Suburban School in Bhowanipore.^{[3][4]} While studying there, he lived in a rented house in the neighbourhood.^[4]

Jamini Bhushan Ray

যামিনী ভূষণ রায়



Portrait of Ray

Born	1 July 1879 <u>Khulna</u>, <u>Bengal Presidency</u>, <u>British India</u>
Died	11 August 1926 (aged 47) <u>Calcutta</u>, <u>Bengal Presidency</u>, <u>British India</u>
Education	<u>Sanskrit College</u> , <u>Calcutta</u> <u>Calcutta Medical College</u>
Occupations	Ayurvedic physician Medical educator Sanskrit scholar
Known for	Founding the <u>Ashtanga Ayurveda College and Hospital</u> Modernising Ayurvedic education in Bengal
Spouse	Saroj Bala Devi
Children	6

He subsequently studied at Sanskrit College, Calcutta, where he earned a B.A. degree in Sanskrit. He simultaneously pursued both an M.A. degree in Sanskrit and his medical studies at Calcutta Medical College, while continuing to study Ayurveda under his father, Kaviraj Panchanan Ray.^{[2][4]}

Ray later obtained an M.A. degree in Sanskrit, for which he received a medal.^[2] He graduated with a degree of Bachelor of Medicine (M.B.) in 1905, receiving a gold medal.^{[3][4][5]} Following graduation, he practised obstetrics and gynaecology before devoting himself entirely to Ayurveda.^[3] Although opportunities were available for him to enter government medical service under the British administration, Ray declined them in favour of practising Ayurveda.^[4]

Ray completed his Ayurvedic training under Mahamahopadhyay Bijoy Ratna Sen and subsequently served as Kaviraj at the Bowbazar Marwari Hospital.^[2] His decision to pursue Ayurveda met with opposition from his family and ridicule from classmates, who warned that he would be unable to earn a living. Ray reportedly replied that, if necessary, he would support himself by selling digestive remedies.^[4]

Vaidyaraj Pharmacy and standardisation of Ayurvedic medicine

One of Ray's most significant contributions was the establishment of the **Vaidyaraj Pharmacy**.^{[1][6]} The enterprise, located at 46 Beadon Street in Calcutta, sought to manufacture and distribute Ayurvedic medicines using more systematic methods of preparation and quality control than had previously been common.^[7]

Historians of Ayurveda regard such efforts as part of the broader modernisation of indigenous medicine during the colonial era. Through pharmaceutical production, standardisation of formulations and dissemination of Ayurvedic literature, Ray and his contemporaries attempted to position Ayurveda as a disciplined medical system capable of operating within an increasingly institutional and scientific environment.^[1]

His work anticipated later efforts by governmental and academic bodies to develop standards for Ayurvedic medicines and education. Medicines produced by the pharmacy were also distributed free of charge to poor patients.^[4]

Founder of Ashtanga Ayurveda College

Ray's career coincided with a period of renewed interest in indigenous systems of knowledge in colonial India. By the late nineteenth century, Ayurveda had experienced a decline in institutional patronage and was largely transmitted through family lineages and traditional apprenticeship networks. Against this background, he became one of several reformers who argued that Ayurveda could regain public confidence only by combining its classical foundations with modern methods of education, research and institutional organisation.

His decision to practise Ayurveda at a time when many Western-trained physicians regarded it as professionally inferior reflected a broader movement to restore confidence in indigenous systems of medicine.^[4] He sought to reconcile classical Ayurvedic knowledge with contemporary methods of

education, publication and pharmaceutical preparation, extending his efforts beyond clinical practice to encompass systematic institution-building, publishing, pharmaceutical development and leadership within national Ayurvedic organisations.^[1]

To realise these structural reforms, Ray founded the **Ashtanga Ayurveda College and Hospital** in Calcutta in 1916.^[1] The college was established with the objective of providing structured instruction in Ayurveda while remaining engaged with developments in modern medicine and scientific research. Unlike the traditional guru–disciple model that had dominated Ayurvedic education for centuries, Ray sought to transfer Ayurvedic education from individual teachers' households into an organised college supported by specialist instructors and systematic teaching. The curriculum was designed to provide instruction in all eight classical branches of Ayurveda (*Ashtanga*) together with practical clinical training through an attached teaching hospital.^[8]



Historic view of the Raja Dinendra Street campus of Ashtanga Ayurveda College and Hospital, Kolkata, in 1964.

The institution was initially established in a rented house at 29 Fariapukur Street in north Calcutta. Besides teaching students, it also provided free medical treatment for poor patients, with Ray himself reportedly attending daily to treat indigent patients.^[4] Contemporary accounts describe considerable local curiosity when furniture was delivered to the building and rumours spread that an Ayurvedic physician intended to establish a medical college there—an idea that some residents initially dismissed as unrealistic.^[4]

Ashtanga Ayurveda College initially admitted twelve students and began with three teachers. Tuition, board and lodging were provided without charge to enrolled students.^[5]



Present-day view of the Raja Dinendra Street campus of the J.B. Roy State Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital, which evolved from the *Ashtanga Ayurveda Vidyalaya o Ayurvediya Arogyashala* founded by Jamini Bhushan Ray in 1916 with twelve students in a rented house at 29 Fariapukur Street.

Ray organised the institution under a small executive committee, serving as principal, while Krishna Das Bandyopadhyay acted as secretary. Biraja Charan Gupta served as vice-principal and Surendra Kumar Kavyatirtha supervised the charitable dispensary. The charitable dispensary reportedly treated more than 100 patients daily. In recognition of its public service, the Calcutta Corporation later approved an annual grant of ₹2,500 to support its charitable medical work.^[5]

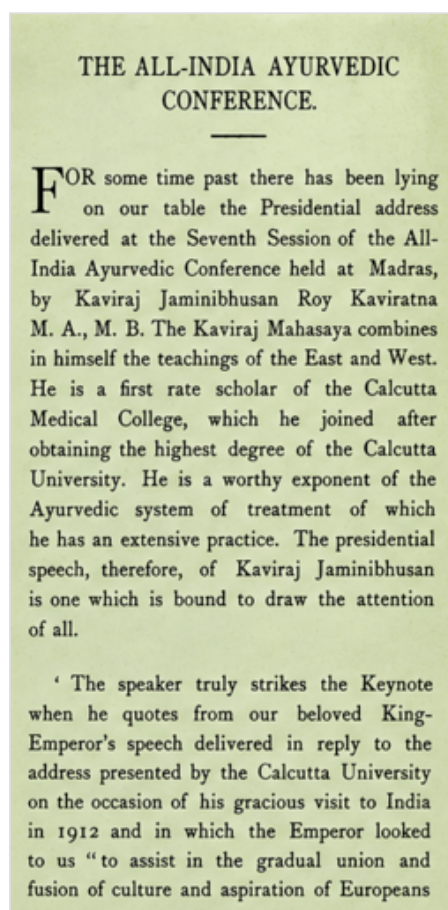
The founding of the college represented an important stage in the transformation of Ayurveda into a modern educational discipline.^[1] According to the *Journal of Research in Ayurvedic Sciences*, institutions such as Ashtanga Ayurveda College played a crucial role in preserving Ayurvedic knowledge while adapting it to changing social and educational conditions in twentieth-century India.

To modernise Ayurvedic education, Ray established a medical museum and a chemical laboratory at the college, representing one of the earliest attempts to combine traditional Ayurvedic teaching with modern educational facilities in Bengal.^[5] Ray also introduced practical instruction in subjects such as surgery, obstetrics, toxicology and medical jurisprudence alongside the classical Ayurvedic curriculum, believing that graduates should be prepared for hospital practice and broader public health responsibilities while remaining grounded in Ayurvedic principles.^[8]

In 1919 Ray registered the institution as a public trust, reflecting his intention that it should operate as a public educational institution rather than as private property.^[5]

The institution later evolved into the **J.B. Roy State Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital**. A contemporary Bengali biographical dictionary records that the institution was then known as *Jamini Bhushan Ashtanga Ayurveda Vidyalaya o Ayurvediya Arogyashala*.^[2]

Presidency of the All India Ayurvedic Conference



Opening panel of the restored Behar Herald report on the 1915 Seventh All-India Ayurvedic Conference. Click to view the complete four-panel reading edition.

In 1915 Ray was elected president of the Seventh All India Ayurvedic Conference held in Madras (now Chennai).^[9] His election reflected his growing national stature within the Ayurvedic community and his prominence among advocates of educational and institutional reform.^{[1][10]}

Contemporary commentary on Ray's presidential address described him as a physician who combined the teachings of the East and the West and praised his efforts to reconcile classical Ayurvedic learning with modern scientific medicine.^[10]

Ray also emphasised that the future advancement of Ayurveda depended upon coordinated efforts by practitioners, scholars and institutions rather than individual endeavour alone. He described the conference itself as evidence of a wider reawakening of interest in indigenous medicine and urged its development in a "truly scientific spirit".^[10]

The gathering brought together practitioners and scholars from different parts of India who were concerned with the future development of Ayurveda. In his presidential address Ray argued that Ayurveda should preserve its classical heritage while embracing scientific education, including renewed emphasis on anatomy, dissection, surgery and clinical training, in order to restore the discipline's vitality.^{[1][10]}

Evidence before the Madras Committee on Indigenous Systems of Medicine

During the 1921–1923 inquiry of the Madras Presidency's Committee on the Indigenous Systems of Medicine, Ray submitted written evidence and was interviewed in Calcutta by its touring subcommittee. The subcommittee also inspected the Ashtanga Ayurvedic College. The report identified Ray and Gananath Sen as practitioners proficient in both Ayurveda and Western medicine and cited their evidence extensively in its discussion of diagnosis and treatment.^{[11]:50–61,99,103}

In his evidence, Ray argued that the decline of Ayurvedic surgery resulted partly from the inaccessibility of Sanskrit medical texts and the scarcity of competent teachers, but maintained that the discipline could be revived through research and systematic investigation. He described Ayurvedic diagnosis as combining observation through the senses and patient interrogation with consideration of a patient's constitution, environment, season and the progression of disease.^{[11]:2–3,50–53,59–61,73–74}

Association with Mahatma Gandhi

Ray's work attracted the attention of Mahatma Gandhi, who shared an interest in indigenous systems of health and self-reliance while also advocating critical examination and reform.^[1]

On 6 May 1925 Gandhi laid the foundation stone of the new campus of the Ashtanga Ayurveda College and Hospital in Calcutta.^{[12][13]}

The occasion became historically significant because Gandhi used his address to call for greater humility, honesty and scientific inquiry among Ayurvedic and Unani practitioners. Although Gandhi criticised exaggerated medical claims and commercial exploitation within indigenous medicine, he distinguished such criticisms from the value of Ayurveda itself.^[12]

The ceremony reflected broader debates within Indian society concerning tradition, science and modernisation.

The association between Gandhi and Ray has since become an important part of the institutional history of the college.^[1]



Mahatma Gandhi, who laid the foundation stone of the Ashtanga Ayurveda College and Hospital on 6 May 1925. 

Philanthropy

Ray regarded institutional development as essential to the future of Ayurveda.^[1] He devoted considerable personal wealth to the growth of the Ashtanga Ayurveda College and Hospital, supporting its educational, clinical and administrative activities.

He contributed approximately ₹70,000 towards the construction of the institution's permanent facilities and, through his will, endowed the college with additional properties intended to support its long-term operation. His bequests included his Ayurvedic research laboratory, museum and a garden estate of approximately twelve bighas at Patipukur, which later became the site of the Patipukur Tuberculosis Hospital established under the leadership of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy.^[4]

According to *Samsad Bangali Charitabhidhan*, Ray donated ₹200,000 towards Ashtanga Ayurveda Vidyalaya on the day before his death.^[2]

These benefactions contributed to the long-term development of one of Bengal's earliest Ayurvedic teaching institutions and reflected Ray's broader commitment to the modernisation and institutionalisation of Ayurvedic education.

Publications and scholarship

Ray was also active as a publisher of Ayurvedic literature.^[14] The title page of his 1920 work *Prati Sanskrita Roga Binischaya* identifies the Ayurvedic Medical College at 29 Fariapukur Street as its publisher.^[15]

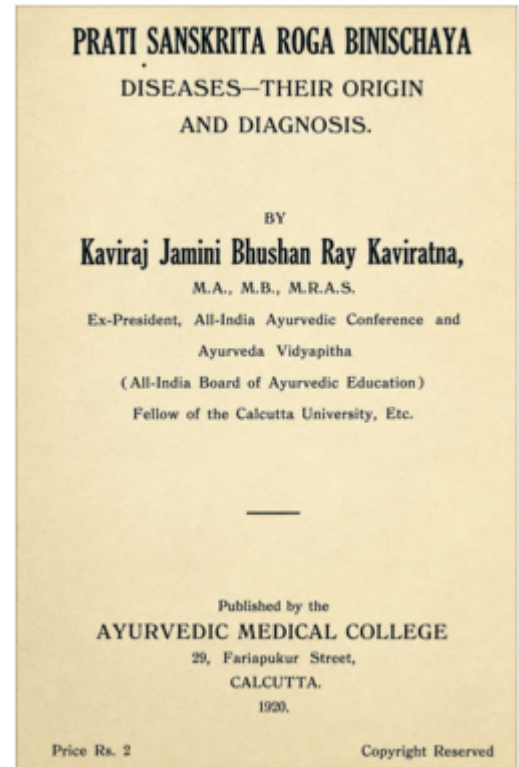
In addition to his medical work, Ray was a Sanskrit scholar and author. His books on diagnosis, paediatrics, toxicology and diseases of the ear, nose and throat were regarded as authoritative by later writers.^[4]

He was elected a Fellow of the University of Calcutta and was also a member of the Royal Asiatic Society.^[3]

He also served as an examiner for Banaras Hindu University and various other universities and educational boards.^[3]

Ray's writings formed part of his broader effort to present Ayurveda as an intellectually rigorous and scientifically engaged discipline.^[3]

The 1923 committee report listed five Sanskrit works by Ray among Ayurvedic texts then commonly used as textbooks: *Roga Vinischayah*, *Kumarantram*, *Vishatantram*, *Prasutitantram* and *Shalakyatantram*.^{[11]:135}



Title page of *Prati Sanskrita Roga Binischaya* (*Diseases – Their Origin and Diagnosis*), published in Calcutta in 1920. 

Although listed below under their English titles for ease of identification, the works were originally written in Sanskrit.

- *Diseases – Their Origin and Diagnosis (Roga Vinischaya)*.^{[16][17]}
- *A Treatise on Diseases of Ear, Nose, Throat and Mouth*.
- *The Care of Infants and the Diseases of Children*.
- *Prasutitantram* (obstetrics).^{[11]:135}
- *A Manual of Toxicology*.^[18]

These books drew upon several branches of the classical Ayurvedic Tantras, namely **Shalakya Tantra** (otorhinolaryngology), **Prashuti Tantra** (gynaecology), **Bish Tantra** (toxicology) and **Kumar Tantra** (paediatrics). He also founded and edited the Bengali monthly journal *Ayurveda*, which sought to promote Ayurvedic scholarship and education in Bengal.^{[3][5]}

Influence beyond Bengal

The influence of Ashtanga Ayurveda College extended beyond Bengal. Among those associated with the institution was the Sri Lankan Ayurvedic pioneer G. P. Wickramarachchi, who studied there during the early twentieth century.^[1]

Wickramarachchi later became one of the most influential figures in the development of Ayurveda in Sri Lanka and founded institutions that contributed to the modernisation of Ayurvedic education in that country. Historians have cited this connection as evidence of the wider regional impact of Ray's educational vision.^[1]

Personal life

Ray was married to Saroj Bala Devi, with whom he had six children.^[14]

According to the CCRAS biographical profile, two of his youngest sons died while still in their late teens.^[14] His sons Bijoy Bhushan and Amar Bhushan later practised Ayurvedic medicine at the institution founded by their father.

Amar Bhushan Ray subsequently served as superintendent of the Patipukur Tuberculosis Hospital, which had been established on land bequeathed by his father.^[19]

Death and legacy

Ray died in Calcutta on 11 August 1926 at the age of forty-seven.

Modern scholarship emphasises Ray's role as an institution builder, particularly his creation of educational, pharmaceutical and research structures that helped integrate Ayurveda into the modern academic environment.^[1]

The institution he founded survives today as the J.B. Roy State Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital, while his contributions continue to be recognised by organisations such as the Ministry of AYUSH and the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (<https://ccras.nic.in/>).



Historic view of Patipukur T.B. Hospital, later reorganised as Patipukur Ayurvedic Hospital, in 1964.



Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, who laid the foundation stone of the Patipukur Tuberculosis Hospital on land bequeathed by Jamini Bhushan Ray.

Ray's philanthropic legacy also extended beyond the college itself. According to the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), property at Patipukur that he bequeathed to the institution became the site of the **Patipukur Tuberculosis (T.B.) Hospital** approximately seven years after his death. Established as a 60-bed tuberculosis facility, its foundation stone was laid by physician and statesman Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy. The hospital was later reorganised as **Patipukur Ayurvedic Hospital**, which today functions as a 94-bed annexed campus of the J.B. Roy State Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital.^{[14][20]} This institutional legacy reflected Ray's broader efforts to bridge traditional Ayurvedic practice with organised medical education and clinical institutions, a transition emphasised in modern scholarship on his career.^[1]

Recognition

Ray's contributions continue to receive official and scholarly recognition. A street in Kolkata near the institution he founded, Jamini Kaviraj Row, was named in his honour.^[1]

The Ministry of AYUSH has continued to commemorate Ray's birth anniversary through official social-media posts in recent years, reflecting his enduring recognition by the Government of India nearly a century after his death.^{[21][22][23][24]}

Ray has also been included in the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) (<https://ccras.nic.in/>) *Documentation of Life Profiles of Luminaries in the Field of Ayurveda*. As part of this initiative, CCRAS hosts a biographical profile of Ray and supported the publication of the research paper *Kaviraj Jamini Bhushan Ray: The man who led the Ayurveda renaissance in Bengal*.^{[1][14]}

See also

- [Ayurveda](#)
- [Swadeshi movement](#)
- [Gananath Sen](#)
- [Vaidyaratnam P. S. Varier](#)
- [Hakim Ajmal Khan](#)

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External links

- *A Pioneer of Neo-Ayurvedic Approach* ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jamini_Bhushan_Ray_-_A_Pioneer_of_Neo-Ayurvedic_Approach_by_M._N._Pal_\(1964\).pdf](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jamini_Bhushan_Ray_-_A_Pioneer_of_Neo-Ayurvedic_Approach_by_M._N._Pal_(1964).pdf)) by M. N. Pal (1964)
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