

Evaluation of Ayurved Treatment in Colonial Bengal

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Abstract: *Ayurved treatment is a tradition of India. Ayurved treatment was started from ancient period. Ayurved treatment was built based on various medicinal plant. In ancient and medieval period ayurved treatment was the main way for alive the indigenous people. First stage of ayurved treatment in India, only Brahmin practice the ayurved treatment. In medieval period muslim rule unable to effect on ayurved. Ayurved treatment spread in large parts in India. From the beginning of British rule in India, to be born the interest of Europeans about the indigenous treatment system. Ayurved medicine widely spread at the time of swadeshi movement. Till today, ayurved treatment equally save the Indian health. Many Indian medicines company made the Ayurvedic medicine for various diseases. Ayurvedic medicine is an herbal medicine that has no side effect.*

Keyword: *Ayurved, Colonial, Herbal, Indigenous, Science, Treatment etc.*

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Introduction

Ayurveda is an oldest medical treatment system in India and was developed more than 2500 years ago in India. The Hindu medical text of ayurveda is the oldest and best medical science in the world.¹ We can learn about the magnificent account of Ayurveda from ancient Indian medical texts. Charak and Sushruta were the pioneer of the ayurveda in India from the ancient

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times. The practitioners of Ayurvedic medicine are generally known as Vaidya or Kaviraj. Before the formation of modern Ayurvedic medical colleges, they used to receive Ayurvedic education from their gurus. In Bengal, Murshidabad has held a superior place in the practice of Ayurveda since long ago. Different sources of history pointed out that the practice of Ayurveda in Murshidabad district started from the time of King Shashanka for royal requirements. The Pala kings and Nawabs of Bengal depend on indigenous Ayurvedic treatment. Indian Ayurveda faced adversity when the Unani system of medicine gained patronage in the medieval period and Western medical rulers like Allopathic and Homeopathy during the colonial period. The colonial government stopped the practice of indigenous medical science in the Calcutta Madrasas and Sanskrit Colleges by establishing the Calcutta Medical College.² Yet, after much research into the Indian traditional medical system, the Company Government began practicing indigenous medical science in Sanskrit College and Calcutta Madrasa. Then the view of the British medical officials on the way to Indian medical science was not good, moreover, there was a concept called 'Orientalist-Anglicist Debate' concerning the proposing of western education in India, this concept also affected British administration in the proposing of public health arrangements in India.³

One more point to be discussed here; a huge number of Indians and Europeans lost their lives due to the widespread outburst of different epidemic maladies in Bengal in that time. Maladies such as smallpox, cholera, malaria etc. turn out so severe. That in maximum cases these maladies could not be treated by traditional medical systems. Furthermore, there was a shortage of doctors, so the British ruler had to focus on another medical systems such as European medicine in the interests of colonialism. Modern historians, especially David Arnold,⁴ Anil Kumar, Poonam Bala and Aurobindo Samanta, have shown how the British ruling class wanted to take over the civil society of this country through medicine. Calcutta Medical College was established exclusively for the practice of Western medicine. When two indigenous medical institutions were closed, the government's meager efforts to promote indigenous medical practice failed. Scholarships, job guarantees and free foreign trips were offered to attract Indian students to Western medical practice. Madhusudan Gupta, a professor of Ayurveda at Sanskrit College, joined Calcutta Medical College in 1835 along with his colleagues. He broke with traditional conservatism and on 10 January 1836, he personally dissected a corpse for medical observation.⁵

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The government welcomed him from Fort William with a salute of fifty guns. The Company government saw this incident as a victory of Western medicine over indigenous medical systems. Although this incident was considered an important milestone in the field of medical science, many Ayurveda lovers in Bengal considered this incident as an insult to indigenous medical science. But the popularity of Ayurveda could not be suppressed, as most people used indigenous medicine. After this incident, some prominent Ayurvedic doctors of Bengal played an important role in the renaissance of Ayurveda. They started making medicines, publishing journals and providing Ayurvedic training.

From the studies that have been done on the nature of indigenous medicine under colonial rule, three characteristics easily emerge, trend of revival, trend of professionalism, and movement led by the upper caste. Charles Leslie believes that the quality of indigenous medicine deteriorated during the Swadeshi period. Paul Brush, however, believes that a kind of professional attitude developed in indigenous medicine in colonial India during the colonial period. The third view is that of the revival of indigenous medicine with the help of aristocratic landlords etc. Many have noticed an expression of cultural nationalism in it. It is difficult to judge the thoughts circulating on the movement regarding indigenous medicine in its entirety by any one characteristic. As one group wanted the indigenous medicine system to attain professionalism. These doctors lacked textbook knowledge which needed to be removed. Among the supporters of this view, K. N. Panikkar must be mentioned.⁶ Professor Dr. Aurobindo Samanta believes that from the beginning of the 19th century, colonial rulers encouraged the testing and application of indigenous medical systems, with the government's political objectives behind it.⁷ The government implemented that objective through three stages. The justifies of indigenous medicines in the light of Western science, the introducing of indigenous medicines with doctors in various medical schools, to the practice of Western medicine alongside indigenous medicine. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, indigenous herbal medicines had become so ingrained in Western medicine that it became increasingly difficult to distinguish them.⁸ Poonam Bala has shown in her research that, how Western rulers exploited indigenous Ayurvedic medicine in Bengal to further their own interests.⁹

From the beginning of the arrival of the colonialists in India, Europeans began to be interested in the medical system of this country. Foreigners mainly started showing special

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interest in Ayurveda, Unani and indigenous medicine. Their main objective behind this was to discover the practical usefulness of Indian medicine. Between 1810-30 AD, Europeans started researching Ayurveda in Bengal (Wilson) and Madras (Heyne). Europeans' interest in Indian medicine gradually increased with two objectives, to highlight the limitations and deterioration of Indian medicine; to establish the progress of the West. Although the interest of both the government and private sectors in Western medicine increased, the government continued to look for alternative ways to control the overall situation in the colony to save it from diseases and epidemics. Western medicine was inaccessible to the poor people of this country. Therefore, the trust of the common people in traditional medicine remained unwavering even during the colonial period. The government wanted to use indigenous medicine in various medical colleges and government medical centers for its own benefit. A separate list of indigenous medicines was also collected by the government. When Western medicine became prosperous, The East India Company's Medical Board declared Ayurveda unscientific. However, after 1920 AD, a committee on indigenous medicine was formed and they recommended that indigenous medicines be used through various experiments.

Since the ancient times, Ayurveda was not only the preserve of Brahmins in India, but non-Brahmins also practiced Ayurveda. In terms of practical medicine, Ayurveda can be compared to Chinese or Egyptian medicine. Although Unani medicine originated during Muslim rule, there was no particular conflict between Ayurveda and Unani medicine. Poonam Bala, added in the appendix of her research, a list of various medical centers in India during the Muslim rule in India.¹⁰ In various parts of India, especially in Bengal, Ayurveda was practiced in guru houses or educational centers. Some of the main centers of Ayurveda practice in 19th century Bengal were Nadia, Murshidabad, Hooghly, Bankura, Kolkata, Chittagong, etc. Initially, Ayurveda practice started under government patronage during the British rule. But even though government patronage stopped during Lord Bentinck's rule, Ayurveda practice in Bengal did not stop completely. There were basically two schools of Ayurveda practice in Bengal, the West Bengal school and the East Bengal school. In this context, it would not be wrong to identify Kaviraj Gangadhar Roy as the pioneer of the Ayurveda renaissance in Bengal. Kaviraj Gangadhar Roy of Murshidabad and Gangaprasad Sen of Kolkata played a principal role in the practice of ayurveda.¹¹ Gangadhar Roy was known as the famous Kaviraj of Murshidabad

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district, he was born in Marunga village of Jessore district. He came to Saidabad in Baharampur in 1819 and started his career as an ayurvedic doctor. However, he had to move to Calcutta for some times. Later he returns to Saidabad permanently in 1836.¹² Acharya Gangadhar Roy started Ayurveda practice in Murshidabad and wrote about forty-one books on medicine. One of his books is 'Jalpa Kalpataru', a story based on Charaka's book. Gangadhar Roy established an ayurvedic school in Calcutta where ayurvedic education used to be taught.¹³ Another personality, Kaviraj Gangaprasad Sen, started Ayurveda practice centered around Kolkata. Under his leadership, Ayurveda became a counterpart to Western medicine. As an alternative to Western medicine, he started preparing and selling medicines by advertising them in newspapers along with price lists. Vijay Ratna Sen, a student of Gangaprasad Sen, translated various old books into Bengali to spread Ayurveda medicine among the people. A struggle to revive Ayurveda began with the efforts of Jamini Bhushan Roy, Gananath Roy and others. The ayurvedic doctor like Gangadhar Roy, Annadaprasad Gupta, Indubhusan Bhattacharya, Satish Chandra Bandopadhyaya, Ranajit Kumar Bandopadhyaya, Joytish Chandra Sarkar, Sricharan, Joytindramohan Sarkar etc. of Murshidabad district got reputation by treating according to ayurvedic formulas. Census of 1872 pointed out that, the number of Kaviraj in Murshidabad district were 2258.¹⁴ When the colonial rulers withdrew their patronage of Ayurveda medicine, the indigenous medical group started the process of revival. However, there were two groups of indigenous doctors. One group believed in mixed medicine and the other believed in purist medicine. In the early part of the 20th century, the 'All India Ayurveda Congress' was formed to protect Ayurveda. They compared the struggle for the existence of Ayurveda with the struggle for independence.¹⁵ In 1921, a national school was established for the practice of Ayurveda.

The Swadeshi movement brought an end to an era of beggar politics through the large participation of the common people, especially women. This movement paved the way for the future Gandhian movement and questioned the wisdom of contemporary leaders who opposed the inclusion of the common people because they believed that India was a nation in the making because the common people had little or no idea about the politics of their time. Few extremist leaders like Bipinchandra Pal, Balgangadhar Tilak wanted to expand the movement to different parts of the country, they were severely criticized by the moderates, which led to the partition of Surat in 1907. The Swadeshi movement reflected Curzon's divisive policy of dividing Bengal

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into two separate parts on the basis of religion. Bengal was a major political force and a stronghold of the Congress; Curzon's life's mission was he was an imperialist, who wanted to weaken the Congress. Secretary of State Herbert Risley said that Bengal United was strength, and a divided Bengal would pull in different directions. In December 1903, the news of partition of Bengal were made public. It spread like wildfire; the people became angry and leaders like Surendranath Banerjee toured Bengal and called on the people to boycott foreign goods. Bengali Newspapers like, Hitabadi and Sanjeevani launched an aggressive press campaign against partition, with about 50,000 leaflets being distributed throughout Bengal. With the introduction of printing press in nationalist India, the print media gained momentum. Bengali leaflets were quite popular among the masses. The editors of various nationalist newspapers and magazines revived the feeling of patriotism among the natives. They started patronizing indigenous products and boycotting foreign products. The patronage of nationalist leaders was indigenous medicine. In the time of British rule, newspapers and magazines were limited to the urban elite or the educated middle class. However, the uneducated segment of the society was not excluded from it as they were the ones who listened to the speeches of educated influentials. The most important aspect of the Swadeshi movement was the emphasis on self-reliance or 'Atma -shakti'. The protesters boycotted foreign goods and even boycotted the education system. Based on Tagore's Santiniketan, the Bengal National College was established with Aurobindo Ghosh as its principal. The National Education Council was established in August 1906 to organize the teaching methods to convey scientific knowledge to the masses in the vernacular. The movement, encouraged by nationalist leaders and newspapers, was a boon for the revivalists of indigenous medicine. Since Ayurveda was already widespread in Bengal, especially in rural areas, the movement helped in the widespread acceptance of Ayurvedic medicine as its counterparts. Western medicine, were abandoned due to foreign origins. Ayurveda flourished during the Swadeshi movement as it was one of the symbols of the movement that was related to the culture, traditions and religion of the natives. During the Swadeshi movement, the Ayurveda Company was established with the aim of spreading Ayurveda.

Commercial production of Ayurvedic medicines started in Kolkata. Gananath Sen came forward to lead the Ayurvedic movement in India. He encouraged the production of Ayurvedic medicines on a commercial basis with the help of various machines. In this context, the names of

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Shakti Aushadhalaya¹⁶ and Sadhana Aushadhalaya are particularly noteworthy. Under the leadership of Mathuramohan Chakraborty, Shakti Aushadhalaya established its branches in Varanasi, Kolkata and Rangpur. Under the leadership of Yogeshchandra Ghosh, Ayurveda practice was started in Bhagalpur by the hand of Bengalis. Kabiraj Jaminibhushan Roy was a pioneer in the effort to improve Ayurveda with the help of Western medical science. It was mainly due to his encouragement that Gananath Sen established the Vishwanath Ayurveda College in Kolkata. Kabiraj Yogindranath Sen took the initiative to bring together Ayurveda practitioners from different parts of India under one umbrella. He arranged medical conferences with local doctors from Colombo to Kanpur. The success they achieved during the colonial rule as professionalism, technology, etc, gradually entered the practice of Ayurveda can certainly be called 'modernity of tradition'.

Like Bengal, Ayurveda medicine was revived in Kerala during the colonial rule. Paninpani Sangkuni Warir came forward to lead this cause. Although this talented personality from a conservative family was well-versed in various sciences, he was known as an Ayurvedic physician. He received his education in Ayurveda from Vasudevan Mose. His treatment system was mixed. He received education from Western medicine and respected surgery. He considered Ayurveda to be an integral part of the religion and culture. In his thoughts, he highlighted what was needed for the development of indigenous medicine - the restoration of traditional knowledge, the development of educational institutions, the preparation and distribution of medicines. One of Paninpani Sangkuni Warir's steps was the establishment of the 'Arya Vaidya' conference in 1902. By organizing annual discussion meetings every year, he tried to spread the creative thinking of Ayurveda, past and present. Another notable contribution of his was the preparation of a list of medicines and the instructions on the dosage of each medicine. His various writings were translated into Malayalam. He and his close relative Krishna Warir jointly wrote the 'History of Ayurveda'. An Ayurvedic educational institution was established in Calicut in 1907. Ayurvedic practice began there in Sanskrit and Malayalam. At the same time, teaching in physiology, surgery and obstetrics, which are included in Western medicine, also continued. The purist group of doctors severely criticized Warir's efforts. Before Paninpani Sangkuni Warir, such movements were seen developing in Maharashtra under the leadership of Shankara Shastri Pandey and in Madras under the leadership of Gopalachari.

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The colonial dominance in the field of medicine was greatly challenged by the British ruler. Previously, knowledge of tropical diseases was confined to the British ruler. As the British ruler needed armies to maintain their colonies, and military officers serving in various parts of the subcontinent came into contact with the tropics, knowledge of traditional indigenous medicine became essential for the British ruler. Army officers began to investigate medicinal herbs and their healing properties. Some Western medical practitioners learned Sanskrit and studied classical texts. Orientalist scholars translated Indian materia medica into English. During that short period, Western scholars were open to Eastern knowledge, but with the rise of missionaries and utilitarians, the complexities of Western superiority came into question. The racist outlook and the theory of white man's burden forced the colonizers to see the natives as savages, uncivilized, unscientific and uncultured. The local medical colleges were closed and the Calcutta Medical College was opened. The medium of instruction was in English and the local language teaching system lost state support. Native medical education suffered a great setback. Traditional medical practitioners had to remain on their own terms as their reach among the masses was still intact. Nationalist journals and newspapers supported the cause of native medicine. Several institutions were formed to transform Ayurveda into a modern scientific system of medicine that could be incorporated into the mainstream healthcare system of India.

Conclusion

The history of Ayurveda is deeply rooted in the Vedic texts. The Swadeshi movement shows that the revival of Ayurveda was due to the growing sense of nationalism among the people. The Swadeshi movement rejected everything foreign and embraced everything indigenous, such as Ayurveda. At the time of swadeshi movement ayurved flourish in large parts of Bengal. Kept the effective role to treat the various diseases during the colonial period.

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¹⁶ “Shakti Ousadhaloy” is traditional ayuevedic based dispensary, located in the Dhaka. Its main center is located In Patuatuli area of old Dhaka. Shakti ousadhaloy established in 1901, as the first ayurved research center in Indian sub-continent.