

Shastri Shankar Daji Pade

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Shankar Daji Pade (1867 - 1909)

Gunigananarambhe na patati kathinii susammamadbasya. tasyaambaa yadi sutinii vada vandhyaa kiihashii bhavati

“Innumerable human beings relate only to a few family relatives and a small number of chosen friends, and never engage with the wider community. Thoughtful leaders ceaselessly pray for the birth of courageous souls, steeped in faith, and with missions in life to benefit the nation”. This article presents the life profile of just such a soul, a truly noble son of his motherland.

Pandit Shankar Daji Pade’s ancestors lived in Narayana village of Pune district. His father, Shri Daji Shastri Joshi, moved with his family to Mumbai, where his expertise in Jyotish - astrology, made him wealthy and famous. Born in 1867 to the Pade family of Deshastha Brahmins, known for their peacefulness, honesty, devotion, and noble natures, Shankar Daji Pade fully manifested these virtues.

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In Maharashtra, the Deshastha clan has produced many such saintly persons.

By the age of eight, Shankarrao had completed his Marathi basics and started learning Sanskrit literature including Nyaya, Vyakarana, and Mimamsa from the famous Pragnyachakshu Pandit Gatulalji. He also began studying the Vedas with Pandit Prabhakar Waiker, always coming top of his class in the Pathashala. As a student, he was preoccupied with ideas of national service and renaissance. He used to gather the Pathashala students and lecture them on broader social concerns. He also initiated a “Pancha” of co-students to peacefully resolve any disputes between students, so that issues were resolved without involving teachers and parents.

During childhood, his anger was like that of Rudra (often seen in Yogically evolved souls). However, as he matured he attained a calmness that enhanced his reputation, helping fulfill his life’s mission. At the age of 12, with the help of his elder brother and friends, he started *Balamitra*, a monthly periodical. He organized all the publishing expenses himself, seeking no support, something that bespeaks of his high self-esteem and endeavor. He somehow managed all postage and incidental expenditure out of his own pocket money. To cover printing costs, he came to an arrangement with Shri Nanasheh, the owner of Jagadishwar Press: he would proof read all the work at that press as the payment for the printing costs. Previously, he had contributed articles to *Vidya Prakash*; this he also continued. As a consequence, he became famous as a talented Marathi author. Officers of the magazine *Sayaji Vijay*, published from Vadodara (later from Mumbai), invited him to be editor. He accepted the opportunity and gradually developed it into a very popular magazine. However, his close bond with his father soon brought him back to Mumbai. By this time, recognition of his scholarship, deep thinking, and expressive skills raised his status to that of a Marathi author of eminence. After this, he did not take on the burden of editing any other journals, rather under various pseudonyms such as “Shankar,” “Pinaki,” and “Bhramar” he continued to publish articles all his life.

For example, in the journal *Native Opinion*, he steadily if

somewhat intermittently published a series entitled *Srishti Sanchar* on diverse important subjects. Occasionally his articles created a major stir in the Marathi community. Those on “Bharat Maha Mandal” and “Theosophy” led to major controversies. Even Tilak's *Kesari* chose to be silent on his committed issues. Pade's pen never hesitated to express his views on serious issues in complex debates. At night, whenever he sat down to write, he would continue until 2.00 or 3.00 am. On nights when he woke at 2.00 am, he would write until dawn.

Besides his public service, he worked as a manager of the Jagadishwar Press and developed it significantly. He never identified himself with any particular political party, but during his terminal illness, he occasionally expressed his extraordinary regard for the great Marathi freedom fighter Lokhmanya Tilak, whom he considered far beyond the realm of ordinary mortals, more a Mahatma. In his daily life, he was a strict “Swadeshi” and proud of Hinduism.

Leaving these aside, let us now focus on Ayurveda. On his father's side, several family members were astrologers. In his mother's family, “Ayurveda” was the main topic of discussion. Padeji's mother knew practical aspects of Ayurveda well. A well-known Vaidya Kulkarni, who had much affection for Padeji, resided in the neighborhood. Shastriji used to spend long sessions with him, and a positive image of Ayurveda was deeply etched into his mind. Seeing Shankar's inclination for Ayurveda, his father too encouraged him to study the subject further. This pleased Shastriji immensely. His life's purpose was then settled. Sri Kulkarni was expert in Ayurveda practice more than in Shastric scholarship, so Shastriji learned practical aspects from him, while he himself developed a new path of Shastrabhyasa. Along with his “Vaidyak” studies, he engaged himself in listening to and learning Shastras, Vedas, Kirtans, and lecturing as well, greatly pleasing his family and friends. He also began publishing a monthly journal on Ayurveda in Marathi – *Rajavaidya*. Five or six years later, he started *Arya Bhisbak*, merging it with the previous journal.

Tukaram has said, “*nishchayaache bala kaa mbane techi phala*” meaning, “who can fully describe the excellent fruition of the strength of will, determination, and persistence?” Shastriji's strong will led to the single-handed accomplishment of his great work. After his study of Ayurveda, but before publication of *Rajavaidya*, he realized that our ancient transcendent and people-friendly Ayurveda had been grossly neglected, arriving at an unevolving static state. This realization brought him a kind of *divine* enthusiasm. He determined to:

- advance the learning and teaching of Ayurveda,
- open schools of Ayurveda to grant degrees,
- make people aware of the strengths and secrets of

Ayurveda and health,

- search out and publish ancient/medieval books/texts written by Rishis and Vaidyas.

He became convinced that contemporary Vaidyas need to be encouraged and motivated to advance Ayurveda. So everywhere he went, he stimulated people to establish associations and discussion groups on Ayurveda. In the same way that Vaidyas are now transiting through Shani's malefic influence, with allopathic doctors eager to drown the Vaidyas' profession, there was in those days an aggressive movement against Vaidyas in the province of Mumbai. Padeji initiated his movement so wisely that doctors did not increase their antagonism, rather they actually helped his work. There was a renaissance quality to the man. His strategy led to a world of Ayurvedic conferences. At these conferences, Vaidyas together with doctors began seriously considering research and development in Ayurveda. As a result of these dialogues, even allopathic doctors began to understand Ayurveda's importance. They also learned to trust the competence in Ayurvedic practice of Vaidyas, whom they had earlier labeled as quacks!

Before executing his ideas, Shastriji presented them to his peers, discussing his plans with colleagues and requesting their help. But no one was forthcoming with any major assistance either material or professional. Many considered his ideas quixotic and ridiculed him for his dreams. Others merely paid lip service. But Padeji was a soul determined to pursue his decisions. Not letting his enthusiasm wane, he continued publication of his periodicals *Rajavaidya* and *Arya Bhisbak*. He truly believed that the vision gripping him would also incubate in the minds of other good people in India. He determined that, even were that not the case, he would not be distracted from his chosen path, so firm was his faith that there would be both sympathy and support for his ideas and work – at least from some quarters.

His articles and journals offered a suitable medium for the enlightenment of people concerning Ayurveda's role in health. He was certain that, even if not during his own lifetime, his ideas would certainly come to fruition in the future. The inertia and ridicule he faced among common people would eventually give way to improvement. He sacrificed a great deal in this pursuit – physically, economically, and socially. His job at Jagadishwar Press, together with income from clinical practice, provided him with the resources required to run his periodicals. *Arya Bhisbak* was continuously published till his death, benefiting Marathi lovers of Ayurveda.

Shastriji published more than 75 books, commentaries, and edited books, including several outstanding ones on Ayurveda. *Arya Bhisbak* published more than 25 Gujarati editions selling around 100,000 copies. He drew up a

list of 702 ancient Ayurvedic texts. As he enriched his clinical expertise, he reorganized Ayurvedic education, incorporating excellent tables, algorithms, etc., aiming to develop students into superior Vaidyas. Just as he had run an Ayurvedic periodical in Gujarati, he attempted to benefit Hindi readers with his Ayurvedic knowledge by starting *Sadvaidyakaustubh*, a monthly periodical. Through that medium, he published five or more books on Ayurveda in Hindi.

His efforts in Ayurveda were not restricted to writing and publishing. Together with Popatram Prabhuram and others, he started “Ayurveda Vidyalaya” in Mumbai. His immense effort and labor created enough support to start the institution. When he found that, under the cover of Ayurveda, the college was becoming anglicized and allopathic, he withdrew from its management. Three to four years later, he founded “Ayurveda Vidyapeeth” at Nasik, with one Vidyalaya there and another at Nagpur.

Spending thousands of rupees on Ayurveda’s promotion, he held Annual All India Conferences on Ayurveda, for Vaidyas, doctors, hakims, and educationalists, initiating presentations and debates on many Ayurvedic topics. Examinations and degrees were provided. Many Vaidyas, from all around India, benefited from them. In addition to the All India Conference, he inspired state-level Ayurveda conferences, also pursuing organizational matters in several states – Gujarat, Punjab, United Province, etc. His work on conferences and organizations received patronage from the princes of Vadodara, Kolhapur, Darbhanga, Barava, and other rich philanthropists.

In March 1909, he established a Vaidya Sabha and Vidyalaya in United Province. He was also seeking support for the next All India Conference on Ayurveda to be held at Varanasi. Preparations were proceeding strongly and the planned inaugural function was to be on Chaitra Shukla Prathama (Gudi Padwa). However, he developed “Visham Jwara” and passed away at Prayag on “Ram Navami” at 12:30 pm, 30th March, 1909, after being delirious or unconscious for 2 days. While still conscious, he had jumped up and shouted, “Tilak Maharajki Jai! Tilak Maharajki Jai!” As a friend of Tilak, he also said, “Don’t consider Tilak an ordinary man, he is a Mahatma!” His last reported words were, “O citizens of all Bharat! Listen...I have tried to unite the languages and wisdom of India. Now it is up to you to continue my work.”

He was committed to making Hindi a Rastra Bhasha, and Devanagari a national script, spending thousands of rupees on the project. For nearly 12 years, he brought out *Bharat Dharma* in three languages, publishing it as a monthly, fortnightly, or weekly periodical. Despite all the losses and

low numbers of subscribers, he continued to publish the magazines up to his death.

Shastriji was the first to see the value of fairs and festivals to the process of national awakening. For 20 years, he organized “Aryamitra Melas.” Once they were on a sound footing, he handed the reins over to other competent persons whom he had groomed. Such fairs and festivals are now a pillar of the “Ganapati Utsava” initiated by Lokamanya Tilak. To create public awareness through Ganesh Utsava, Vijaya Dashami, etc., was his obsession. His amicable nature and pleasant speech were proverbial. He was so industrious and hard-working that one wonders at the extent of the domain of his work. How did he accomplish so much single-handedly? He died of cerebral malaria at the age of 42. He made friends without any discrimination of caste and creed. Although he achieved so much and received support from princes and kings, he amassed no wealth for himself. Whatever he earned, he spent on his public work. He was always kind to the poor, treating them free and showing them compassion. He always used to say, “Even from a commercial point of view, giving free treatment to the poor is never a waste. Getting relief from your treatment, they will become living advertisements. Everywhere they will praise your virtue, and your practice will only gain.”

His married life was also exemplary – indeed, a penance. He was married at the age of 21, but his wife’s health deteriorated to the extent that his marital pleasure was nonexistent, with no hope of progeny. Despite his relatives’ insistence on his finding a second wife, he never remarried. Yet he never let his love for his wife decline, and she loved him as much as he loved her. Although having no children of their own, their hearts were not bereft of parental love. Together, they raised the orphaned son of his younger brother, Bala Saheb or Govindraj Dinkar. Even when Shankar was only going away for 4 days, he would take his wife and nephew along with him.

The first question that arises is “what is happening to the work he so ably began?” What of his endeavor to bring about a renaissance of Ayurveda: training competent Vaidyas; preparing and publishing books dealing with profound aspects of Ayurveda; gathering excellent editors and teachers? Has all that ceased? In our unfortunate nation, when uncommon men achieve great works, undaunted by obstacles during their lifetime, their departure leaves their work stalled. Balasaheb’s efforts, and a committee of eminent and famous persons, prevented Shastriji’s life-work from suffering the same fate. All those committed to the nation’s good are grateful to them.

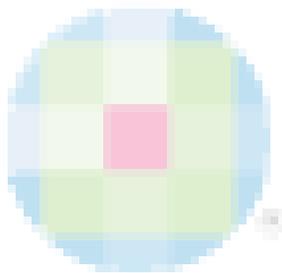
Shastriji, in his short life of 42 years, evolved a vision of renaissance in Ayurveda. Now it is left to his friends,

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followers, and admirers to carry through his aspirations for an Ayurvedic renaissance. May God grant him peace eternal, and strength to all who wish to advance his work to fruition and success. Aum Shanti!

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