



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## Queen Mary's Hospital

Ajay Kumar Awasthi, Research Scholar, Department of Medieval and Modern History,  
University of Lucknow

### Abstract:

This article explores the development of women's medical education in India, focusing on the establishment of a pioneering institution in Lucknow. Historically, Indian medicine was dominated by Ayurveda, with the practice largely restricted to upper-caste Vaidas, while women were confined to domestic roles. The introduction of Unani, Siddha, and Western medicine brought new dynamics to the field, with Western medicine quickly gaining institutional support and popularity. This shift created new opportunities for women, leading to increased demand for female medical professionals.

The article specifically examines the efforts to establish a medical college for women in Lucknow. Despite existing hospitals dedicated to Western medicine, none offered medical education, forcing female students to travel to distant cities. Recognizing the need for local education, the Taluqdars of Awadh championed the creation of a medical college, with a proposal for a women's branch gaining traction. Raja Tasadduq Rasul Khan's generous donation facilitated this initiative, and the foundation stone for the King George Medical College was laid in 1905.

However, progress on the women's branch lagged behind the main college. Financial and planning challenges delayed its establishment until 1909, when detailed plans for a female medical college, including a hostel, were finalized. By 1932, Queen Mary's Hospital for Women and Children was inaugurated, marking a significant milestone in advancing women's medical education and professional opportunities in the region.

Keywords: Women, Medicine, Lucknow, Education, Taluqdars.

India's traditional medical system, known as Ayurveda, was deeply intertwined with its social structure and values, practiced not merely as an occupation but as a duty by a designated group known as Vaidas. Historically, Indian society was divided into varnas and castes, originally based on occupational choices but eventually rigidified by birth. Vaidas, typically from the upper castes, especially Brahmins, held the exclusive right to practice medicine, which was considered a sacred profession. Women's societal roles were confined to the household, regarded as Grah Lakshmi, and they were excluded from professional work. Although, women could not be Vaidas, but they could become Dais, serving as nurses for maternity-related issues.

Later, systems such as Unani, Siddha, and Western Medicine were introduced to Indian society. Unani and Siddha were part of the indigenous medical traditions, while Western Medicine, introduced by Europeans, represented a modern, structured approach with institutional support. This new system quickly integrated into the medical landscape, receiving backing from both British and Native sources. As a result, competition arose between Western and indigenous medicine, with the ruling authorities favoring the former. The institutional nature of Western Medicine allowed people from various backgrounds to gain medical knowledge and join the profession, enhancing its status. This shift also created new opportunities for women, leading to increased demand for nurses and midwives and allowing women to participate more actively in society.

This article talks about a pioneering institution for women focused on Western medicine. The setting is Lucknow, which has been the capital of the United Provinces. Known for its rich Nawabi culture and stunning architecture, Lucknow was seen as an ideal location for this new venture. There had long been a recognized need for such an institution, given that female education was lagging behind despite ongoing efforts. The idea of establishing a medical college in Lucknow gained momentum thanks to the Taluqdars of Awadh. Alongside this main proposal, there was also a suggestion to include a branch specifically for women. Although Lucknow had several hospitals like Lady Kinnaird, Dufferin, Civil, and Balrampur, which were dedicated to Western medicine, none of them offered medical education. Students from the region had to travel to Lahore or Calcutta to study, which was particularly challenging for women. This highlighted the urgent need for a medical institution for women right in Lucknow.

The concept of creating a hospital dedicated to women and children emerged around the same time as plans were being made to establish a medical college in Lucknow. An article titled *The Emergence of KGMC: Best in the East* highlights that the founding of King George Medical College was a significant movement. Starting in 1860, there was a strong demand to establish a medical college somewhere in the United Provinces of Agra and Awadh, which quickly evolved into a movement spearheaded by the Taluqdars. They seized the opportunity during the Prince of Wales' visit to Lucknow and proposed naming the new medical college after him.

During this period, Raja Tasadduq Rasul Khan of Jahagirabad proposed establishing a branch college specifically for women to commemorate the Prince of Wales' visit.<sup>1</sup> He generously donated forty thousand rupees to support this idea, which was met with great enthusiasm. In total, over Rs. 1,50,000 was raised for the female branch of the Medical College in Lucknow, with contributions coming from native rulers and Taluqdars.

On 26<sup>th</sup> December, 1905 Prince and Princes of Wales laid down the foundation stone for Medical College, and in his speech, on the behalf of Princes, Prince told that...

“I am desired by the Princes to congratulate you on the special provision, which, thanks to the initiative and generosity of Raja Tassaduq Rasul Khan, has been made for the education of women. If the medical college becomes, as I hope it will, ‘Best in the East’, a very powerful stimulus will be given to the movement, which will always be associated with the name of Lady Dufferin. I shall be delighted to lay the foundation stone of the college and we are proud that our names will be associated respectively with the institution and its branch college for women.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>File no. 46, (1909), Female Branch of Medical College at Lucknow, Medical Department, UP State Archive, Lucknow

<sup>2</sup> The Pioneer, Thursday, December 28, 1905

The excitement for the female branch of the Medical College was quickly overshadowed by the planning for the main Medical College. While the proposal for the female branch wasn't initially prioritized, the main Medical College received all the attention. For three years after the Prince laid the foundation stone, there was little progress in planning for the female branch. In January 1909, F. E. Taylor, Secretary of Government for the United Provinces, raised a question: 'What provision was made for the female branch of the college in the plans?'<sup>3</sup> He further noted that no steps had been taken to prepare any plans for the female college and suggested consulting the Public Works Department if necessary. Taylor also admitted, 'I had not realized that the public works department had not taken up the question of the female college.'<sup>4</sup>

Butler's note on the financial status of the funds revealed that Rs. 1,57,621 had been promised for the women's college, with Rs. 1,53,316 already collected and deposited in the Bank of Bengal on fixed deposit. All that was needed now was a plan. With the subscription funds in place, it was decided that the time had come to move forward with establishing the female branch of the medical college. Captain Crookshank, the Executive Engineer of the Medical College Division, was asked to draft preliminary plans and estimates. Taylor emphasized that the costs should be kept within the lakh and a half that had been raised and that the subscribers should have the chance to review the plans and provide feedback.

In discussions with local officials, the Inspector General of Civil Hospitals was tasked with selecting the most suitable site for the women's college. Captain Crookshank, the Executive Engineer, proposed plans to build the college near the Balrampur hospital site. The plans also included a hostel for female students, and it was suggested that the hostel be located close to the college for convenience.

A meeting held at Darul Shafa, Lucknow, on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1909. It was attended by the Inspector General of Civil Hospital Colonel R. D. Murray, Raja Sir Tasadduk Rasul Khan of Jahangirabad, Lieutenant-Governor James Anderson, Munshi Ganga Prasad Verma, Shaikh Shahid Husain and Government Secretary F. E. Taylor. In the meeting, Colonel Murray proposed that the money should not all be spent in buildings, but that a considerable sum should be kept as an endowment. He suggested that Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 30,000 should be expected in the erection of a hostel to accommodate, say, thirty pupils. It was agreed that this accommodation would be sufficient for many years to come.

At the meeting of the committee the view expressed by Inspector General of Civil Hospitals in his letter were generally accepted. The committee proceeded to consider what should be done in the way of buildings, &c., and, though Jahangirabad rather hankered after a special Female Medical College building to be named after the Princess of Wales, he came round to the opinion of the others that the best use to be made of the one and a half lakhs was to put up a hostel, make suitable arrangements in the male class rooms, &c., for the female students, and to keep a considerable sum as an endowment for scholar ships for needy female students.

The papers in the file show that at the time of the Princess visit there was a proposal that a highly qualified lady principal should be selected by the Princess at home. It is clear that the money available will not suffice to pay the salary of such a principal. Out of one and a half lakhs, say half a lakh goes to buildings, the remaining one lakh invested in government paper or municipal debentures would probably give Rs., 3,500 to Rs., 5,000 a year, that is three or four hundred rupees a month. You cannot out of this pay an English lady principal and keep money for scholarships in addition.

<sup>3</sup> File no. 46, (1909), Female Branch of Medical College at Lucknow, Medical Department, UP State Archive, Lucknow

<sup>4</sup> File no. 46, (1909), Female Branch of Medical College at Lucknow, Medical Department, UP State Archive, Lucknow

Finding a suitable site for the hostel was a crucial task. It was expected that the Inspector General of Civil Hospitals and Captain Crookshank would handle this. Since female students would be attending lectures at the main college, the hostel needed to be nearby. The initial plan was for a 24-room hostel. A site for the female students' hostel was proposed in connection with Lady Kinnaird Hospital, with a grant of Rs. 6,000. Miss Mayne, the Principal of Lady Kinnaird Hospital, was eager to take over the land for this purpose.

The construction of the hostel for female students was completed as scheduled, allowing them to commence their classes at the medical college. However, the development of the associated hospital experienced delays. Ultimately, the construction of the Hospital for Women and Children was finalized in 1932, with the government completing the building at a cost of Rs. 2,67,603. The hospital was subsequently transferred to the university and was named Queen Mary's Hospital, in accordance with the earlier decision to honor the Princess.

This research illustrates the transformative journey of medical education for women in India, highlighting the significant shift from traditional practices to modern institutional frameworks. India's rich heritage in Ayurveda, deeply rooted in social structures and caste distinctions, initially restricted professional medical roles to upper-caste Vaidis and limited women's involvement to domestic roles as Dais. The introduction of Unani, Siddha, and particularly Western Medicine brought about a paradigm shift, fostering a competitive environment and expanding opportunities for medical education across diverse backgrounds.

The establishment of King George Medical College in Lucknow marked a pivotal moment in this transition. The concurrent initiative to create a women's branch underlined the growing recognition of the need for female medical education within the region. Despite initial delays and challenges, significant contributions from figures such as Raja Tasadduq Rasul Khan and community support led to the successful completion of the female hostel and eventually the Hospital for Women and Children.

The culmination of these efforts in the opening of Queen Mary's Hospital in 1932 represents a landmark achievement in advancing women's roles in medicine. It not only reflects the evolving medical landscape but also underscores the enduring impact of collaborative efforts in shaping educational opportunities for women.

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