



The first Indian female doctor to open her own clinic in Bombay, Dr. Kashibai Navrange was born on 25th October 1878. Her schooling began at Pandita Ramabai's Sharda Sadan, and she completed her matriculation in 1896 from Huzurpaga in Pune. She returned to Bombay and joined Wilson College, earning a degree in Bachelor of Arts. In 1907, she passed the Licentiate in Medicine and Surgery (LM & S) examination. She opened her dispensary in 1907 at Bhuleshwar (Karve 2014), which made her the first Indian woman to establish a dispensary (Marfatia 2020). With this, women had the option to be examined by a female doctor in the privacy of a clinic (Bhot 2022).



She contributed immensely to medical care for women in India. She started a Garbhavati Chikitsalay, a hospital for pregnant women in Bombay, which provided free medication to poor women. She also engaged herself in several social reform activities (Marfatia 2020). She was actively associated with the Prarthana Samaj, begun by Atmaram Pandurang, and the Arya Mahila Samaj, established by Pandita Ramabai for women. In 1917, under the Arya Mahila Samaj, she started a Milk Fund for lactating mothers. This initiative provided free milk to expecting mothers daily (Bhot 2022). The Samaj also aided the poor women, sent clothes to children, and collected funds. She also arranged meetings for women on Sundays and tried to unite them. She was also a part of the Ladies Committee of The Stree Bodhe and Social Progress from Bombay (1908, vii).

Kashibai was a staunch believer in women's emancipation. To make them self-reliant, in 1922, she established an institution for women to teach them business and set up industries in the future. Her initiative was bold and novel at a time when women were not working formally. She was honoured as a Fellow of Bombay University (Karve 2014). She was also actively involved in the Mumbai Municipal School Committee and Lady Honorary Presidency Magistrate and was the Juvenile Court Counsellor in Bombay (Bombay Civil List 1945, 163).

Kashibai's contribution to medicine, social reform, and education earned her the Justice of Peace award, granted by the government. She became the only South Indian woman to receive this award (Karve 2014). She also served as the President of the Prarthana Samaj. In 1934, during the earthquake in Bihar, she led a team of volunteers treating purdah women affected by the disaster. They spent a month in the villages of Bihar, providing medical relief. (Ramanna 2019, 245).

Kashibai passed away on 21st August 1946 at the age of sixty-seven. The Alexandra Road in Gamdevi has been renamed Dr. Kashibai Navrange Road in her honour (The Bombay Civic Journal 19801, 21). After her death, the Arya Mahila Samaj Hostel was also renamed Dr. Kashibai Navrange Memorial Hostel for Women Students (Marfatia 2020). Kashibai Navrange will be remembered as a compassionate doctor who was selflessly devoted to the cause of women's empowerment and well-being.



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